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## THE THRILL OF TRADITION



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THE THRILL  
*Of*  
TRADITION

by

*James Moffatt*

HON. D.D. (ST. ANDREWS, OXFORD, GLASGOW),  
D.LITT., LL.D.

BASED ON THE JAMES W. RICHARDS LECTURES DELIVERED  
BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

1944

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Christ our Lord said, I am the Truth, not, I am Convention. Whatever then savors of being contrary to truth <sup>is</sup> will be heresy, even though it be an ancient custom.

Tertullian in *De Virginibus velandis* (1).

Teach the same truths you have learned, in such a way that your manner may be new, not your matter. But perhaps someone protests, Then is there not to be any progress of religion within the Church of Christ? Certainly there is, progress to the limit. For who would be so grudging towards man, so hateful to God Himself, that he would attempt to forbid progress? Only, it has to be really progress in and of the faith, not permutation, since progress means the development of the subject, whereas permutation means the alteration of one thing into another. Hence throughout the course of ages and generations, as for one man so for all in common, as for the individual so for the whole Church, intelligence, knowledge, and wisdom ought to be making wide and vigorous progress, provided that this lies within its own sphere. The process of religion in the soul should resemble the growth of the body, which remains the identical body even as it evolves and unfolds its constituent parts during the advance of years.

Vincent of Lerins in *Commonitorium* (xxii, xxiii).

Those truths alone are to be reckoned catholic and believed as needful to salvation, which are explicitly or implicitly set forth in the Scripture canon. . . . As for all other truths, neither contained in the Bible nor to be formally and necessarily deduced from what the Bible contains, even though they may be set forth in writings of the saints and in definitions of supreme pontiffs, though they be held by all the faithful, yet they are not to be reckoned catholic, and it is not essential to salvation to attach any faith to them, or on their account to fetter reason and human intelligence.

William of Occam in *Dialogus* ii. 1 (c. 1342).

My authority and works are so greatly despised,  
 My inventions and all I have ever devised.  
 O: O: full well I know the cause  
 That my estimation doth thus decay!  
 The old people still would believe in my laws,  
 But the younger sort lead them a contrary way;  
 They will not believe, they plainly say,  
 In old traditions and made by men,  
 But live as the Scripture teacheth them.

The Devil in R. Wever's morality play, *Lusty Juventus* (c. 1550).

I am of that reformed new-cast religion, wherein I dislike nothing but the name; of the same belief our Savior taught, the apostles disseminated, the fathers authorized, and the martyrs confirmed; but by the sinister ends of princes, the ambition and avarice of prelates, and the fatal corruption of times, so decayed, impaired, and fallen from its native beauty that it required the careful and charitable hands of these times to restore it to its primitive integrity. . . . I condemn not all things in the council of Trent, nor approve all in the synod of Dort. In brief, where the scripture is silent, the church is my text; where that speaks, 'tis but my comment; where there is a joint silence of both, I borrow not the rules of my religion from Rome or Geneva, but from the dictates of my own reason.

Sir Thomas Browne in *Religio Medici* (1).

To insist that religion shall owe nothing to the past, and be the same as if there were no history; to demand that each shall find it for himself *de novo*, as if he were the first man and the only man; to rely, for its truth or its progress, on its perpetual, personal reproduction in isolated minds, is to require terms which the nature of man forbids and the providence of God will disappoint. Transmitted influence from soul to soul, whether among contemporaries, or down the course of time, is not only as natural but as spiritual as the direct relation of each worshipper of God. Indeed, traditional faith, communicated reverence, is that which

distinguishes the nobler religion of civilized and associated nations from the egotism of fetish worship.

James Martineau in *Essays and Addresses* (iii. 34).

The importance of authority and the value of tradition are great. If we are not to lapse into individualistic rationalism and ultimate negation, if we are not to be led astray by our wandering whims, if our personal intuitions are to be guided by the accumulated wisdom of the race, only tradition can help us. Mankind does not begin completely afresh with each individual. The first principles need not be proved by each of us. There is a body of accepted knowledge, a deposit of faith on which we can all draw. Though religion is in a sense each individual's personal affair, it is dependent on past tradition and grows out of it. But loyalty to tradition is one thing, and bondage to it quite another. Complete conformity is contrary to life. Only the dead are completely conforming. Progress is a law of life, and the power of change is essential to conservation. No tradition is final and absolute. The past may help us to reach more elevated heights from which, as the ages move, we may gain a clearer vision of the relations of God and man.

Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan in *An Idealist View of Life* (ii).

It is only the ignorant and the superficial who learn nothing from past experience and past thought. But if we are to take the past as our guide, it is hard to see why we should follow past ages in everything except in the one thing which makes them great, except, that is to say, in attempting like them to add something to human knowledge and human achievement. Mere imitation will contribute nothing to the sum of human values.

H. J. Paton in *The Good Will* (i).

Into the dead atmosphere of the Greco-Roman world came Christianity. The question has often been asked what Christianity brought that world which it had not got already. What was there special and distinctive about Christianity? There is one short



answer which I think will serve. It was a cause. That is why it came into the dead atmosphere like a breath of new air. Men drawn into this society felt that they came into a stream of more than individual life, setting through time towards a great victory. The life of the community was indestructible; the will embodied in it was a Divine Will by which all outside things were to be ultimately shaped and subdued; men might be fellow-workers with God towards the great end; they might give the cause the supreme sacrifice of their lives. . . . The man brought into the Christian community was brought into a stream of dynamic life going through time towards a definite consummation, a divine event, in the future. That remained essential to Christianity, even when it later on borrowed Hellenistic moulds in which to cast its dogmas; we must not be misled by the Greek modes of thought and expression so as to overlook the abiding Hebrew core: the ruling idea that here was a Divine Society called to work and fight through the ages towards a consummation on beyond, even if delayed, none the less sure.

Edwyn Bevan in *The Hellenistic Age* (pp. 103-106).

Questions rise for us whether we will or no. They force the Church from the mere traditionary impression of her principles and practice to sink afresh into the meaning of both and to apply that meaning under new conditions and amid new perplexities. She is compelled to submit afresh to the cross-questioning of the ever-changing, ever-moving providence of God. She is obliged to let drop the mere habits of her history which suffice no longer, and to take up her responsibilities as standing on the ground and dealing with the work and the destiny of the Catholic Church of God. Just by questions that come when we would fain be let alone, God teaches us how great and arduous a thing it is to be that Church and to follow out her calling. . . . The Church of Christ has no liberty to become the slave even of its own history. History is great, but Christ is greater; He is a present Lord with a present will, and the Church abides in Him.

Robert Rainy in *The Present Position of the Union Question*  
(Edinburgh, 1868).

The Church has for its guidance a fresh accession of knowledge of the Way not shared by the original disciples. It possesses its own experience as they possessed and bequeathed theirs. The history of the Church from its foundation to the present hour is hardly less necessary to the Church at large than the Gospel itself, whatever it may be to the individual. Doubtless for the Church, as for the first disciples, what lies before differs widely from what lies behind. But that which runs through both is the Way, the same yesterday today and for ever, to be traced alike in the successes and failures of the past, and to be followed unflinchingly through whatsoever unlooked-for windings it leads among the unfolding hopes or fears of the ages yet to come. Therefore it is a progress and a gain for the Church to go forward in the Spirit. For the dispensation of the glorified Christ is the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. The Way and the Guide along the Way were revealed together.

F. J. A. Hort in *The Way, the Truth, and the Life* (i).

Only a genuine experience of intercourse with a living person victorious over death can lie behind the original creation of the Christian Church, its continuance and frequent revivals during the succeeding centuries, and the renewed sense today that in the Christ whom the Church proclaims as the supreme revelation to men of a God who is Spirit, lies now, as so often in the past, the only hope of a world seeking salvation from fear and despondency.

Clement C. J. Webb in *The Historical Element in Religion* (v).

The final Christian fact is not simply a phenomenon, nor even a person; it is a person culminating in His eternal act, and both co-ordinated in an interpretation, through apostles, by the same Holy Spirit whose was the divine power of the act. . . . In all our sources of information, the fact is never there without the luminous aura of inspiration about it, and a certain interpretation. And this aura is not a mere envelope put about an inert fact, but a radiance emitted from the fact, and as integral to it as the ray to the sun. It is this perennial, intrinsic vitality that makes the great fact more than historic, that makes it a present thing to us.

Christian certainty, our present possession of Christ, is inseparable from some form of the active tradition and experience of the long and living Church. No other tradition is like this tradition of the Church which carries the initial fact, active in it and creative, wherever it comes, and does not simply echo it, or testify to it. It is a timeless act, detailed to the individual not from the remote past alone but also from the deep present, not simply from a historic Lord but from the Lord the Spirit.

P. T. Forsyth in *The Principle of Authority* (vi).

Nay, brothers, 'neath the Eternal Eyes  
One human joy shall touch the just,  
To know their spirit's heirs arise  
And lift their purpose from the dust;  
The father's passion arms the son,  
And the great deed goes on, goes on.  
Edward Thring of Uppingham.

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## CHAPTER I

# The Throb of Words and of the Word

IT is not an ingenious paradox. "The thrill of tradition" is more than a catchy phrase dropped in order to jolt some readers out of the mental groove where tradition is identified or at least associated with what is dull and dragging. Interpret tradition as little better than the same old thing within an age which is not the same, an age alive with aims and claims and interests of its own, and tradition naturally shrivels into an item for some up-to-date Anatomy of Melancholy. But there are traditions and traditions. Some are stereotyped archaisms. Some exist as irrelevant and obstructive survivals of the past. Others wilt and limp as the pace of life tells upon their quality. Yet in a number of directions it is possible to verify the thrill of tradition as a source and resource of life. Although most of those who live in communities under the special pressure of tradition remain blissfully unconscious of how it rose to power, and are even unaware of how it influences many of their practices, the historical sense furnishes data for a philosophy of tradition. Sooner or later its authentic thrill becomes a reality, either for anyone who cares to go below the surface of reflection upon the present as it stretches from the far past into the near future, or as the throb of it is recognized by those who happen to be exploring the course of almost

any movement, in manners no less than in morals, which has survived the period of its origin and succeeded in swaying the conduct of mankind over the broad field of civilization. Mark the word "movement." For, define tradition as we may—and in the sphere of religion the definitions become acute as well as elaborate at certain points—there is movement at the heart of it. In spite of rhetoricians from Cicero to Joseph de Maistre, in spite of Plato himself, upon occasion, etymology is no sure clue to the meaning of a term in religion or in philosophy. Still, is it not significant that as "tradition" came down to us from Greek through Latin, it was originally associated with the idea of a transaction between human beings as they lived and moved in the same group at the same time? Speaking and hearing were its initial phase. A change of attitude was its aim, and words were the first medium of the change—words which were heard, to begin with, and eventually written to be read. In "tradition" there was an exchange between contemporaries. Something was handed or passed over, it is true; but the something was not a thing, much less an abstraction—it was a shift due to the declaration here and now of some truth or rule or custom for life, personal and collective. Within it lay a spring of initiative which required a pulse of consent as it stirred the heart and mind, even when in the form of memories it continued to maintain its hold over some community or section of mankind in later ages.

Thus tradition finally links one generation to another, but the link has a lift in it. To live with it is not to "drag at each remove a lengthening chain." Recurring phases of spontaneous action and reaction are to be expected, indeed. But when we proceed to analyze this lift or thrill

within the group-life of religion or elsewhere, we discover a continuity of experience. The evidence of history shows that it is not any sudden transport or revival, though that may be included in its range; it is not mere ecstasy or excitement, occasioned by a revival or a phase of expansion, not even the thrill of a new idea striking the mind, though that again may occur at some moment of challenge and crisis. A more normal relationship underlies any such special expression. Fundamentally the thrill of tradition may be described as the pulse of the timeless in time. Or, if one desires a rather less abstract definition, let us call it the throb of being in contact with some living truth or force which is older and larger than ourselves. However that truth may be embodied or expressed—in a sacred book, for example, or in any cognate symbols, rites, and usages—its very reminiscences are meant to be resilient and quickening. As it looks back, it looks around and ahead with more than apprehension. One of its functions is to supply an incentive for us, whether as individuals or as a generation. Genuine forms of tradition invariably disclose a context of vitality as well as of authority. It is an unpredictable vitality. Sometimes it may be stubbornly or even passionately reactionary. But on higher levels it inspires a demand to have certain embodiments dropped or altered, because they now seem to obscure or distort or deaden the inner truth of its being; it is a vitality which is alive to the need of change for the sake of self-preservation and efficiency in a growing world of discovery. Above all things, it enters a sturdy protest against the notion that up-to-date views and impressions of the passing day are the first or the last word upon the eternal issues of the human soul. For Christianity this is



as much as to say that a deep sense of the living God may be disturbing as well as reassuring, sometimes disturbing before it can be reassuring. In any case it breathes a healthy air of expectation. While there is apt to be dead matter on any branch of the true Vine, while in every century as well as in the first there are churches which have little more than a name to live, nevertheless there is a persistent thrill of genuine tradition which amounts to the pulse of the Christian spirit beating more or less regularly for thousands and thousands of simple-minded but far from unimportant people within the body of the Church, as its fellowship and worship vibrate not merely with memories but also with expectation at the touch of the living God, the God of our fathers and our God.

Such is the function of tradition in the nexus of the old and the new. Plainly it has a bracing no less than a staying power. One might claim that it does a double service to the faith. During any period of what we call transition, when "things that are made" are shaken and removed, it enables the faithful to understand how the positive purpose in such an upset of the conventional order must be "that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." Also, in more quiet seasons as well, tradition of this high quality continues to be vital as it rouses one generation after another to realize that something lies before them which has never been seen or done before in quite the same way, some experience to be enjoyed or undergone, some fresh venture to be made, some service to be rendered. So it has been from the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

## I

Tradition is older than Christianity, however. The Church took over the idea directly from its Hebrew heritage. where religious knowledge as well as practice had been for centuries interpreted for better and worse in terms of tradition. But when Christianity moved out into the great world, it was speaking Greek, not Hebrew or any Semitic patois, and the Greek spirit which, in more than language, had already touched Judaism, breathed one or two suggestive anticipations of what tradition was to mean for the development of the new faith. The term "tradition" really begins for us with Plato, and with Plato teaching his way of life in the Academy at Athens during the fourth century B.C. His dialogues belong to the great literature of knowledge and power, a branch of literature whose leaves may be for the healing of the nations but are far from being numerous. For almost four and twenty centuries men have been reading these masterpieces of Plato in order to profit by his philosophy. But the original access to his counsels was not through books. Fortunately indeed for mankind, although Socrates left no written word, Plato became an author, first that he might record the wisdom of his revered master, and then that he might promulgate to a wider public than the Academy his own ideals of existence. But he did not write lectures for his disciples at Athens or elsewhere. He started from the axiom that men require a tutor more than a textbook. Whatever notes he may have prepared for a class on special points, his instructions in the main appear to have been oral. Not that they were oracular. He encouraged his pupils to participate in the search for truth by debate

and discussion. Questions had to be put and answered in a fellowship of kindred and challenging minds. But in the course of serious conversation and joint research the young disciples of Plato were urged to reflect, not to study a treatise. He may have died pen in hand, as Cicero puts it; but he began to teach without a pen, and for long he refused to admit that his own deepest thoughts could be transmitted in black and white. He frankly declared that there was not, there could not be, a manual of Platonism. Indeed he was convinced, and in this he was not alone, that any writing needed an interpreter, if it was not to be helpless and misunderstood. How could a book answer the questions that it raised in the mind of the reader? Besides, a written statement finds an audience in posterity; it is designed for more than contemporaries, whereas the Greek noun "paradosis," which eventually became an equivalent for tradition proper, meant specifically for Plato at the outset oral transmission. Such had been the method of his inspired master. What he understood by the term was the imparting of knowledge by word of mouth in and to the present age, and not a message to be conveyed by some impersonal medium to later generations of mankind. At times he will recognize the steadying power of tradition as against rampant individualism. "Nomos" and its compounds generally correspond to what we call conventional rather than to law and lawful, but there are moments, especially in the twelfth book of the *Laws*, when he does seem to attach a certain reverence to the remote past, as though in art and even in politics antiquity possessed authority for subsequent generations. Indeed he thinks more of bygone days as a rule than of posterity. There is no disparagement of yesterday in Plato's charac-

teristic use of "paradosis." At the same time the very verb for it, like its Latin equivalent ("tradere"), often has to be rendered by "inform" or "tell," rather than by "hand down." Literally the word meant "deliver," as we might employ it in the phrase "deliver an address." For while the communications in the Academy were oral they were far from being casual. If the class had no written examinations, it had self-examination urged on it daily. In discussion, prompted and guided by himself, Plato's hearers were expected to use their own minds for the purpose of receiving higher education in serious science of any sort. They might walk up and down as they talked, but their minds did not wander. The master saw to that.

Such was the initial usage of the term "paradosis" in Plato's vocabulary. Practically it was a twin term for teaching. He employed it naturally as he spoke of learning from a living master and not from the far past. So with its verb. "When we say one transmits [or hands over] knowledge," he once wrote, "we say that he is teaching; when anyone takes it in, we say that he is learning."<sup>1</sup> But convictions cannot be handed over like coins. Ideas are not transmitted without some activity of the mind. The real teacher, according to Plato, works with a receptive group; to them he imparts truth or hints of truth through personal stimulus and suggestion rather than through the use of a textbook. "All waits for the right voices." Walt Whitman was an un-Platonic soul, but his motto unconsciously echoed Plato's assumption that right voices were more essential to a vital grasp of truth than right or bright pages. For the Greek thinker it is the oral, not the written, word which imparts a throb of life. One has only to read a dialogue like the *Phaedrus* or even the seventh

of the epistles in order to understand how a distinguished modern scholar concludes that "Plato does not believe in books for serious purposes."<sup>2</sup> His own writings have proved to be creative literature, but he had no faith in creative literature for the purpose of influence or education. He had no idea of the power possessed by a classic to stir fresh vision. He believed in hearers rather than in readers, and in hearers who were more than mere listeners. No wonder, when, as a secondary resort, he had to put his ideas before an audience of intelligent outsiders, he selected the dialogue as the most congenial form for expressing his faith and philosophy. "In his hands and by his masterly conduct of it," according to Pater, "the dialogue becomes like a single living person."<sup>3</sup> Upon the whole this is not an unfair verdict. Oral teaching was primary for him; but next to that came the literary dialogue, since it not only appealed to the poetical side of his genius but corresponded best to the vivid, unsophisticated method of his message—better, at any rate, than an abstract treatise or a general statement of principles. Development of analytic argument by means of conversation is the essence of the dialogue in literature. Hence it was more organic to Plato's many-sided philosophy of life than it usually was for writers of the West, from Cicero to Lucian, from Aristo of Pella to Boethius, from Gregory the First through mediaeval exponents of education and devotion to Sir David Lindsay, from Erasmus to Tasso, from Galileo to Robert Boyle, from Descartes and Henry More to Fontenelle and Fénelon, from Berkeley and Hume to Leopardi, Landor, and others, who employed it artistically to transmit their views of science, art, literature, faith, and politics no less than of philos-

ophy. As a literary form of exposition the dialogue varies in effectiveness, even in the hands of Plato. Yet through his major dialogues, on the whole, faith in the spoken word of "paradosis," amid the interplay of debate, rarely if ever becomes a mannerism.

## II

We have more to do, in these brief studies, than to follow the fortunes of a Greek word and its family. Plato's preference of speech to writing may indeed sound like an interesting paradox, as one-sided as Carlyle's contrary view that a library was or might well be a real university. It is a preference which helps to account for what moderns often feel to be the strange stress on mathematics as primary in higher education. Even if astronomy is included with arithmetic and geometry, why should mathematics be so exalted in the *Republic* as the realm of what was fixed and necessary, of infallible propositions unaffected by experience and opinions? What science was more exact? Its very name stamped it as real "learning" or instruction (*mathêma*). Literally the first disciple (*mathêtes*) in the Greek world was a mathematician. We may wonder at this vogue. But we must remember that for Plato mathematics had the supreme advantage of requiring textbooks less than any other branch of learning.

This predilection for the living voice in education, which explains the primary meaning of "paradosis" for the Greek thinker, is not, however, a mere curiosity, imbedded in the language of a philosophical clique. For several reasons the sense he attached to the term has a bearing on our present purpose. The idea of "tradition" as instruction or information lasted into the early Church,

as we shall see, even when tradition had acquired a wider and specific range. So did its association with oral teaching. So also, though in a minor degree, did the original connection between "paradosis" and criticism. Surely it is a striking coincidence that the unknown genius, Judaeen or Edomite, who composed the book of Job was a contemporary of Plato. This masterpiece is the solitary example of the dialogue in Hebrew literature, and the author deliberately chose it in order to criticize traditional opinions about sin and evil in the moral order. Which was the motive of Plato's dialectic, with its pulse of protest against the very thing that we call traditional, though he preferred to describe it as ancient sayings, received opinions, hampering prejudices, and unexamined social laws. Plato's "tradition" in the dialogues is repeatedly exposing tradition. The truth is, when the Christian religion entered the world, "tradition" awaited it not only in the matrix of Judaism but on the lips of thoughtful Greek and Latin teachers who, untouched by any problem of a sacred book in their environment which required traditional treatment, had nevertheless been for centuries discussing principles that went below the surface in education as well as in history and religion. A survey of their aims and methods, from Plato to Quintilian, shows that tradition and teaching were practically synonymous. Tradition at its best was the manner and habit of expounding a subject to one's contemporaries. It was what may be called a conveyancing term. Its context was not intermediaries between the past and the present. Its primary sphere was not in the realm of books. Later on, "paradosis" might include the account given of a topic or theme in writing; but it never

lost touch with oral instruction, and—this is significant—with oral instruction that challenged the conventional and superficial element in life. Thus “tradition” had a disturbing force; it was critical because it sought to be progressive. Consequently, when Francis Bacon in the *Advancement of Learning* explained that by tradition or delivery of truth he meant “expressing or transferring our knowledge to others,” the Englishman was repeating what had been a commonplace of Greek and Latin usage centuries earlier, as independent groups of thoughtful people endeavored to advance what they believed to be the real knowledge of man and nature. Anyone who instructed his fellows on self-examination or social duty “passed on” to them viva voce a truth or view; and to accept this, to take it in and work it out as a principle or conviction, preferring it to current notions and inherited prepossessions of one’s environment, was the way to learn. Bacon was the sworn foe of any tradition that interfered with knowledge by consecrating the obsolete. But this “tradition” was a very different thing. Faith came by hearing, in the first instance, the faith that in logic and life was ready to act upon its new lesson. The real paradox for us, as we look back into the Hellenistic age immediately prior to Christianity, is that men found it quite natural to use a term like “tradition” for the method as well as for the content of any philosophy which challenged traditional opinions and practices, including the superstitions of popular religion.

Yet so it was. Even after literature had begun to supplement lectures and direct dialogue, from Cornutus to Dio of Prusa, the Stoics in particular employed the term “tradition” for instruction in the moral and scientific



principles of their school. Epictetus, to be sure, was not an orthodox exponent of Stoic science and speculation, but the Stoic spirit was in him when he told his pupils that "the road to perfection lies through oral instruction and such transmission [paradosis] of ideas as you receive here" in my lecture hall.<sup>4</sup> Indeed all we know of Epictetus himself is due to a distinguished pupil who took notes of what the master said. The same is true of Musonius Rufus, to whom Epictetus had listened, and in whom, as we know, there was public spirit as well as philosophical power which commended his words to the class. No doubt, these disturbing principles of the Stoic creed had to be stated with vivid and varied ability in order to be effective. For, as Epictetus goes on to insist, truth requires good speakers no less than attentive hearers. "Tradition," meaning instruction in the tenets of the school, was not repeating things by rote, much less indulging in showy rhetoric. Personality was the nerve of it. In fact, the nobler Cynics and Stoics were more alive to this than their predecessors and rivals. The modern cynic has no interest in propaganda; instead of trying to win adherents he stands apart from humanity, to display his scorn and skill by shooting arrows at mankind as though it were no better than a target. The ancient Cynic looked otherwise at the human race. He had a mission; the world of men was for him a field to be sown with good seed. Nobler members of the school—from Crates, who taught Zeno, to Demetrius, the friend of Seneca—were devoted to the interests of their fellow men with an austere and apostolic fervor. Indeed the spirit and language of the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters in the third book of Arrian's *Epictetus* frequently remind us of the New

Testament pastoral epistles with their description of the true Cynic's high calling as a man commissioned by God to discharge a variety of functions, to heal the soul, to free it from bondage to passion, to be outspoken, to preach, to be a sort of father confessor or, at any rate, a moral director, to act as God's steward, to bear hardship in the service of God and man, and to live unspotted from the world. So with Zeno. When he walked and talked in the Porch or colonnade at Athens, he was authoritative in manner as Plato had never been. The Platonic spirit was essentially a stimulus to free inquiry, a ferment rather than propaganda; but Zeno had intense convictions. He wrote as well as debated in their favor. He trained young Stoics to be disciples and missionaries for a role not unlike that of evangelists or preachers in the primitive Church. They would argue in season and out of season, as their critics sometimes objected, at street corners as well as in lecture halls. The effectiveness of their message and mission, the rousing appeal of their tracts and teaching for a while to circles who were untouched by the mystery cults of the day, depended largely upon what they themselves were. In summing up his obligations to a certain Apollonius, the emperor Marcus Aurelius mentioned his "skilfulness in imparting philosophical ideas." "Some think that he was too generous to his mentor. Yet at its best this facility, more evident in Musonius Rufus and Epictetus than in Seneca and Plutarch, corresponded to the power of persuasiveness and conviction which belongs to a speaker who has access to the deep springs of character. Among Cynics and Stoics alike, the leading spirits of the movement were equipped with two advantages: they were teachers who possessed

the rare gift of personality, which enabled them to repeat themselves without becoming insipid or exaggerated, and then they also tried honestly to commend the arguments of their lectures by a consistent personal life.

The context of the terms which later were applied to tradition, in its technical sense, was therefore colloquial. Tradition dealt with listeners rather than with readers. But in course of time this was overlapped by two developments, by an appeal to some continuity of teaching from age to age and by recourse to writing; that is, to a succession of teachers in a school of thought and also to written records embodying their truth, preserving its authentic content, its impact and impulse, its authoritative message. Truths thus transmitted were a charge, as indeed the very term "tradition" suggested, with its nuance of authority. What was handed down or handed over carried weight. "Paradosis" was equivalent to our modern term deliverance. When we talk in English of someone who delivers an opinion upon a subject, we imply that he is pronouncing a considered estimate, perhaps even pronouncing what amounts to a judgment on the matter. As we know, this turn of speech readily slips into a phrase for uttering what is to be taken as decisive. Thus John Stuart Mill, in the second chapter of his treatise on Liberty, speaks aptly of "the recorded deliverances of the Founder of Christianity." There are obiter dicta in the epistles, naturally, but there are no obiter dicta in the four gospels as they transmit the teaching of our Lord. When "paradosis" assumed a written form, before or outside Christianity, the vague notion of authority, which was already present in its content, became more explicit. Though the authority was not corporate, in our modern

sense of the term, tradition for Greeks came to mean something laid down, something with a binding force, even when it denoted no more than the standard text of an author like Homer, very much as Jews came to speak of the Masoretic or "traditional" text of the Hebrew Bible.

### III

All this brings us face to face with tradition in relation to what Christians know as the Word or their sacred book. But before handling the connection between oral tradition and written scripture, we note one special development of tradition as a binding force in the religious world. By the time that Christianity rose, "paradosis" had passed from its Platonic and philosophic context into the vocabulary of several mystery cults and mystical philosophies throughout the empire, where it denoted regulations in the shape of a medley of secret rites, potent names, and magical formulas transmitted by the gods to their "prophets," who in turn transmitted them to the initiates. "Remember," says Cicero in his *Tusculan Disputations* (i. 13. 29), "when you were initiated, what was handed down to you in the mysteries" of Greece. The technical term for this lore, in content as well as in transmission, was "tradition." As it happens, there is a solitary reference to one phase of it in the New Testament, which is significant since it represents a type of false traditions rising like fungi on the soil of belief in the redeeming power of the Lord. It is the first specimen of the species.

When the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Colossae in Asia Minor, he had to repudiate one form of such

a theosophy which had recently emerged. It is far from easy to make out more than the general outline of this syncretistic movement, but apparently some speculative members of the local community were in danger of infringing the apostolic message of Christ's full and central place in the order of redemption and revelation, by introducing Oriental notions of intermediaries. "Beware of anyone getting hold of you by means of a theosophy [literally, philosophy] which is specious make-believe, on the lines of human tradition, corresponding to the Elemental spirits of the world and not to Christ. It is in Christ that the entire Fulness of deity has settled bodily, it is in him that you reach your full life, and he is the Head of every angelic Ruler and Power." The new theology did not deny the reality of the historical Jesus. The issue was not between a human or humanitarian Jesus and a divine Son of God, but between a full and a qualified recognition of Christ's significance. Evidently these Colossian theosophists maintained that while Christ had indeed died, and died a redeeming death, the world was still dominated by elemental spirits, angelic and astral powers; surely these aeons or subagents, through whom providence still operated inside the material order, deserved respect and reverence, especially as they somehow determined the destiny of man within a universe where the soul was clogged and hampered.

It is curious and significant that this phase of current syncretism, a blend of Jewish Christianity and Hellenism on the borders of primitive Christianity, was put forward as a sort of higher life which supplemented and completed the local, provincial gospel of the Church, and that it used the term "philosophy" (or theosophy), which

later came to be employed in the monastic movement. No doubt, like the phrase "full life," it had been one expression at Colossae for a claim to higher enlightenment than what the primitive gospel enjoyed, and for a corresponding code of ascetic practices. Indeed one aim of the self-imposed discipline was to propitiate the astral powers, and by fasting to induce visions. To this the apostle alludes in his next warning. "Let no one take you to task on questions of eating and drinking [tabus such as the Torah laid down], or in connexion with observances of festivals, or new moons, or sabbaths" (the yearly, monthly, and weekly celebration of sacred seasons in the Torah). "Let no one lay down rules for you as he pleases, with regard to fasting and any cult of angels, presuming on his visions and inflated by his sensuous notions [literally, by his fleshly mind—it is not spiritual at all, but preoccupied with the material side of life], instead of keeping in touch with the Head" (that is, with the Lord Christ, who is superior to planetary aeons, the one and only Head of the Church which is his "entire Body"). Then the apostle continues his appeal. "As you died with Christ to the Elemental spirits of the world, why live as if you still belonged to the world? Why submit to rules and regulations . . . determined by human precepts and tenets?" The last four words echo Isaiah's lament over contemporary religion in Judah being a matter of custom and traditional rote. These rules, the apostle adds, "get the name of 'wisdom' for their self-imposed devotions, their fasting, and their rigorous discipline of the body, but they are of no value, they simply pamper the flesh!"

The Christian "wisdom" of the apostle taught a strict

discipline of bodily appetites; but this was based on the redeeming power of the risen Lord who had emancipated man from slavery to lower passions as well as from the fatalism which lay behind any cult of astral powers. To the artificial, arbitrary tradition of these theosophists and their asceticism, he opposes belief in the risen Lord who had finally made the world order a place for the souls and bodies of Christians to inhabit, free from all fears of magic, demons, and fate. On Him all depends. "For it was in him that the divine Fulness willed to settle without limit," unshared by any aeons or intermediaries between God and man. The subject matter of the Christian revelation or tradition is Christ, not any hybrid cult of planets or angels. "Elemental spirits!" the apostle sarcastically writes. Yes, to heed them is to relapse into the rudimentary. They are an elementary form of religion. So far from being a higher level of devotion, such a cult is below the level of what the Church possesses as it enjoys the supreme revelation of God in Christ alone. Thanks to the experience of such a revelation, "as you have been taught it" by the gospel, not by any human tradition, loyal Christians should "abound in thanksgiving. . . . Let the inspiration [literally, word] of Christ dwell in you with all its wealth of wisdom [real wisdom] . . . praise God with thankful hearts." Hellenistic cults of the day had made men familiar with the idea of a divine communication being followed by thanksgiving from the recipients. What is new here is the source of this thrill, no other deity than Christ in His unshared glory. For the Greek term "logos" in this connection<sup>6</sup> denotes more than "word," in the sense of message; it is the vital expression or inspiring revelation of Christ as Christians

had been taught to know Him by the apostles. This alone, St. Paul claims, ought to make life overflow with gladness. It brings the heart of faith to the lips.

## IV

Already, however, outside Hellenism the throb or thrill of religious tradition had been felt in connection with the Word, not merely with words about the Word. Some Stoic or semi-Stoic leaders in the Roman west have been not unfairly described as missionaries and even in some cases as domestic chaplains or spiritual directors, so seriously did they take their vocation. Hort once had to remind Westcott that, while "the old religions were for all good purposes gone, Stoicism was surely an attempt to provide a good working substitute for religion for the common man as well as for the philosopher." Yet Stoicism was not a religion; it produced no church, any more than Orphism did, and it had no sacred book. Whereas at the very moment when it was waning, during the period of the Antonines, the Jews were engaged in developing the content of tradition as a central feature of their faith in connection with the Law.

It is true that the problem of written and unwritten laws had already been a familiar theme. Sophocles had touched it in his *Antigone* especially. It had been raised in Greek political life and thought. There, as well as elsewhere in the ancient world, "dikê" (or justice) was the way indicated by custom, the course prescribed by usage; so that law denoted originally an unwritten body of decisions and decrees for the regulation of social life within the community. In the golden age, according to Posidonius,<sup>7</sup> no lawbooks were required: written laws were



introduced when the masses needed protection against the arbitrary conduct of kings and tyrants. But even wise legislation, like that of Solon and Lycurgus, was subject to corruption. Fortunately, on the other hand, traditions were not entirely superseded. Alongside of a code, oral regulations and usages operated still. In fact the lawbooks themselves came under criticism from thinkers who considered that moral principles like humane feeling and justice, honor and honesty, were superior to any corpus of written decrees, since the motive for acting on them was higher than mere fear of punishment. Besides, they were written on the hearts of men; not only was response to such principles the only religion worthy of a free individual in the moral order of the universe, but it possessed ethical capacities of advance more richly than any adherence to formal prescriptions of a fixed code. So Stoic moralists like Dio Chrysostom and Maximus of Tyre especially were arguing, at the threshold of the very period when the synagogue was obliged to turn its attention to the same problem. Only, the Jews worked it out practically, as no Greek thinker had occasion or ability to do. Also, their sacred lawbook was held to be the inspiration of later traditions.

The principle underlying the vogue of oral tradition in general was that, if a practice or belief had a good pedigree, this amounted to a guarantee that the custom must be substantially legitimate. Long descent invested it with authority, and placed it above questioning. So with a statement on religious requirements. Those who are of yesterday, what weight can their words carry? Antiquity is a note of authenticity. Since the idea of progressive revelation was unheard of, the rabbinic schools had to fall back

upon their store of such traditions, manipulating item after item. They had enough material which had been accumulating during several centuries. And traditions could be told and retold, for generations, with astonishing fidelity to the original terms of the tale. Literary records might be useful, but they were by no means essential for the transmission, not so much of deeper instincts and intuitions as of rules, rites, and interpretations. Unwritten tradition in this specific sense had been for long one of the cohesive factors in Jewish polity, especially after the rise of Ezra the scribe; it prevailed in the administration of the native law during the Persian and Greek periods. The "customs which Moses delivered us" and which St. Stephen was charged with altering, the "traditions of my fathers," for which the apostle Paul had been once so zealous, were still unwritten regulations of the Pharisees. But after the fall of Jerusalem, even before the emperor Hadrian had finally to suppress the militant, nationalistic messianism which Bar Cocheba and Rabbi Akiba had revived, the rabbis set themselves in Palestine and Babylonia to work out a new religious jurisprudence in order to prevent their distinctive form of theism from being swamped. Did Christians speak of the Law as a provisional stage in revelation? Did they exalt the great prophets? With a superb defiance of sense, history, and even scripture, which was unparalleled till some Roman apologies for Tridentine tradition appeared, the Talmudists based their reconstruction of belief and practice on the Torah imparted to Moses during the forty days on Mount Sinai; they ruled out even Aaron from any share in this and included in it every subsequent declaration or revelation. For the modern mind, which

regards the Pentateuch as written about Moses rather than by Moses, it is not easy to enter into this conception of a Mosaic deposit of revelation containing everything in essence, but such was the assumption underlying the reconstruction of Judaism. The belief, for all its unhistorical basis, made history, as is often the case. According to the Babylonian Talmud (Berakhoth 5a) a third-century rabbi called Simeon ben Lakish neatly defined the tradition by expounding Exodus xxiv. 12 ("The Lord said to Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them") thus. "*Tables* [that is, the Ten Words], *Law* [that is, the Scripture], and *Commandments* [that is, the Mishna], *which I have written* [that is, the prophets and the writings], *to teach them* [that is, the Gemara]; thus we are taught that all these were given to Moses from Mount Sinai." By "the writings" he means the hagiographa or remainder of the Old Testament. As for the prophets, they were supposed to do no more than apply the Mosaic message as a rule for Jewry. In fact, as one rabbi of the third or fourth century put it in the Baba bathra (12b), "Since the day that Jerusalem was destroyed, prophecy has been taken away from the prophets and given to the wise men," the seers and sages of the rabbinical schools. The Babylonian Talmud was proud to chronicle this statement. It is true that these sons of the Torah, in their Beth Din or high court of appeal, might practically have to set aside some findings of the Torah itself. But theoretically the Torah was absolute and self-sufficient; it contained not merely the written tradition but the oral as well. "All knowledge is not couched in Moses' law," said Milton's Satan. The

rabbis were convinced that it was, especially when the school of Shammai waned before Hillel's stress on exegesis. The Torah alone could be the reservoir of revelation. Had it not existed before creation? Was it not the organ of creation? Where else did the source of religious knowledge lie? So the sages of Judaism believed and argued, with many a disputation, till their bold, patient studies of the text resulted in a Talmudic Mosaism. It was a counter-reformation of Judaism against Hellenism and Christianity, with oral tradition allied to the written Word. Oral tradition indeed was a living, continuous interpretation of the divine will for the people of God, and it possessed two channels: one contained halakha, authoritative definitions and directions for conduct, rules based on the Torah, while into the other flowed the more miscellaneous haggada, edifying stories, fanciful legends, and expositions derived from the rest of scripture as well. Naturally the latter had not the same binding force as the halakha. But all of this, both halakha and haggada, started from an ingenious and artificial exegesis of the written Word evolved by generations of scribes, whose pathetic and earnest aim was to show how the letter could serve the spirit, as Judaism found itself obliged to face unforeseen requirements in morals and theology. Finally the collections of decisions and comments culminated in the immense compilations of the two Talmuds, the Babylonian superseding the Palestinian, although not even Talmudic authority prevailed with some powerful minorities or prevented some actual departures from it and readjustments of its course by subsequent swirls of tradition.

Presently a similar development occurred in Islam,

the latest of Semitic religions, and for much the same reasons. Indeed the mosque may have consciously followed the synagogue here. The text of the Quran was fixed in 651 A.D., according to orthodox belief. It was venerated as the word of Allah; it belonged to the essence of Allah, its contents being verbally transmitted from the heavenly archetype through the angel Gabriel to the prophet in the sacred speech of Arabic. But, as the Mosaic Torah was brought up to date by the Mishna and then by the Gemara, so the contradictions, complications, and gaps in the Quran were adroitly explained or explained away by tradition (or "hadith"), which was intended to serve the broad task of accounting for many a current, time-honored practice in later Islam by providing jurists and the devout respectively with some basis for it. The religion of the sacred Book was thereby rendered available and authoritative for conditions of life which were very different from the customs of the primitive Arabs. After Muhammad died and the stream of revelation dried up, "sunna" (or custom), hitherto a general term for ancient usage, was specifically applied to traditions or memories of the prophet. Luxuriant collections abounded. In some cases their contents were believed to have been taken down from his lips by companions whom he had trained for the mission of propaganda; then they were handed down by a succession of accredited teachers. Only, while the Jews had sharp variations of opinion in the academies of the rabbis, these were nothing like the feuds in Islam. Rifts here were due to political party-spirit no less than to sectarian divisions, since Islam was a polity as well as a religious community. Tradition was developed as hadith with more zeal than

discretion in the interests of the various parties. Stories and sayings of the Prophet were freely fabricated on all sides. The result was that a rough-and-ready science of tradition had to be devised, as in the case of Judaism, in order to guarantee the more genuine products. Eventually some Muslims became rather dubious about traditions altogether, just as in the eighth century a Jewish party called the Karaites, or Readers, arose, who declined to accept any tradition that could not be deduced directly from the letter of the Torah and insisted on the right and the duty of the individual to search the scriptures. Within contemporary Islam, from the ninth century, the Mutazilite sect similarly regarded the Quran. Nevertheless, tradition still managed to retain its sway over the faithful almost unchallenged. Soon it was promulgated that "the sunna can dispense with the Quran, but not the Quran with the sunna." Theoretically the Quran underlay law and education. Elaborate commentaries on it were compiled. Yet in practice oral tradition enjoyed a vogue of its own. Skeptics might shrug their shoulders, but popular preachers liked nothing better than to repeat, in the ears of an impressionable crowd, this alleged saying of the Prophet, "If you meet any lofty utterance, do not hesitate to attribute it to me." Thus were all reasonable doubts removed.

Both faiths thus adhered tenaciously to oral forms of the tradition. The Mishna (teaching by repetition) claimed to have handed down material provided by the six generations of Tannaim (that is, repeaters of tradition) between 30 B.C. and 220 A.D. But apparently no thoroughgoing attempt was made to put any part of this oral collection of laws into writing till the beginning of

the third century, during the old age of its famous Galilean editor, Judah the "prince" or patriarch. It was his edition that prompted grateful Jews to declare that "the study of the Mishna is equal to sacrifice," as pleasing to God as offerings in the temple had been. To moderns, unacquainted with the tenacity of the Oriental memory, it may seem almost incredible that any part of the Mishna could have been preserved for so long in memory alone. But the achievement is not unexampled. The early phases of Jainism in India are a parallel, besides literary cases of oral tradition elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> During the early centuries of Islam there was indeed sharp controversy over the question whether traditions ought to be written at all, with the possible exception of such memoranda as the companions of Muhammad had drawn up. Even when the ninth century saw vast collections of hadith being edited, oral testimony maintained its position as a factor in securing accuracy; it was held essential for deciding the transmission and verification of traditions which were to be included, such was the retentiveness of memory. More than that, the Quran itself, heard or read aloud, counted as a living oracle. Was it not learned by heart from childhood, thereafter to be recited? Islam is a striking proof that it takes more than a world of books to domicile even the religion of a Book, particularly when for most men their memories still are practically their libraries. We moderns contrast documentary evidence with hearsay, mere hearsay. No such antithesis prevailed as traditions rose to power in Islam or in Judaism.

Both faiths also had to combine exegesis and jurisprudence in their development of the tradition principle. The Mishna was indeed the official handbook of the

halakha traditions. Doubtless a pleasant little anthology like the *Pirke Aboth* is predominantly haggadic; but the other sixty-two tractates about business, law, morals, and ritual frequently handle casuistry in all phases of the term, justifying their decisions on considerations of exegesis. Call this legal or nomistic; the fundamental interest is, at any rate, a process of extracting rules rather than beliefs from a bible phrase or combination of phrases. As for Islam, it was avowedly a legal religion of submission or obedience to Allah, which required a common law corresponding as far as possible to its theology. But while "the gladsome light of jurisprudence" was more than a phrase for Sir Edward Coke, and while exegesis has its own interest and even its fascination, neither is exactly thrilling, except by way of appeal to a very limited circle. Much less can a conglomerate of both be described as inspiring. Tradition is careful and troubled about many things in such a connection, and they are apt to be provincial things of little moment to the soul of man. Thin veins of devotional and mystical religion do crop up, now and then, inside the traditional tomes of both faiths, as they expound what is supposed to be the mind of Moses or of Muhammad. Handfuls of profound and moving thought may be picked up. This is especially true of the midrashic or expository literature of Judaism, where many a pointed saying is preserved. Yet upon the whole the vitalizing element in tradition is directly felt, not so much in anything that it does for the Old Testament or for the Quran as in the outward, practical symbolism of the two cults. There, rather than in any creed, their witness told upon the world. Each had an instinct for dramatic realism, which drew the line between believers and



unbelievers by more than a recourse to arguments and abstract statements. Judaism had its rites, its monthly and annual festivals, its liturgies, and above all the sabbath and the synagogue. These formed a perennial means of preserving and expressing its identity. Islam lacked anything like the liturgical and musical services of the later synagogue; but then it possessed, to its great advantage, the five pillars, as they were called—in reality they were like five fingers of a living hand that upheld and guided true believers: the Muslim profession of faith; fasting, especially during Ramadan; pilgrimage; the impressive gestures and utterances of public prayer; and almsgiving. Here it was that tradition throbbed, as it still throbs. The truth is that without some such power of bringing human life, individually and collectively, under a breathing discipline of response to what came as revelation, and that upon many a level of civilization and in many a land outside the country of its birth, neither form of monotheism could have survived and spread.

## CHAPTER II

### The Epichristian Age and Its Sequel

MEANWHILE another form of theism had been taking shape along the seaboard of the Mediterranean, which also generated in due time a tradition round its sacred book. On the seventeenth of July, 180 A.D., four months after Marcus Aurelius died in the Balkans, twelve peasants from Scili, or Scillium, in the province of proconsular Africa, five of them women, were beheaded at Carthage because they refused to swear in court by the genius or life-spirit of the emperor. They did not indeed think of the date as A.D. The Christian calendar did not originate for several centuries later. But for these peasants every year was an *annus domini*, a year of the Lord. They believed that life turned on the choice between their Lord Jesus Christ and any other lord, even the imperial lord. And their belief was bound up with the possession of a written Word. At their trial the proconsul asked what they had in the little box that held their church library, probably suspecting that the codices, perhaps of vellum, or rolls of papyri contained seditious matter or magical rites. They assured him that the box held nothing but some "books, and also letters of Paul, an upright man." The books were the gospels, or some of them, which like the apostle's epistles had been translated into Latin. Nearly a century and a half had passed since Jesus was

crucified in distant Palestine. These Libyan martyrs had never seen an apostle. But their gospel books and epistles preserved a living tradition of testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ; with that throbbing in their hearts and minds, they were ready to bear their own testimony to Him by laying down their lives rather than call the emperor by the divine title of Lord. The one Lord we Christians know, they maintained, is "the king of kings and emperor of all nations." As one of the women put it, "Honor to Caesar as Caesar, but worship is for God." The Spirit who had inspired the records of the faith nerved the little group to die for the conviction by which they had been living in their fellowship and worship. The ruling idea of Christians was not the idea of the ruling authorities; for the time being it was in conflict with what the State, in spite of its tolerance, could not afford to tolerate. These peasants encountered a question of loyalties, and humbly but bravely upheld their religious loyalty against any political demand for allegiance. The proconsul pled with them to "abandon this persuasion." You misguided peasants, give up your adherence to this religious body of yours! For already Latins could speak of "persuasion" as we English use it to denote a fellowship of corporate convictions. But the Scillitans had read their apostle to good purpose. They also were "persuaded that neither death nor life" was "able to separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus their Lord." Nothing mattered except to be loyal to Him. The proconsul's appeal was in vain. He had to pronounce sentence of death. Whereupon the leader of the group said, "We give thanks to God." One of his companions declared, "Today we are witnesses in heaven." Then all walked out to be executed,

crying, "Thanks be to God." More was said and done than is disclosed by the original abstract from the official shorthand notes of the trial.<sup>9</sup> When later Christians rewrote it, they embroidered the story with pious coloring; but the first editor was content to record, "So they all together were crowned with martyrdom, and reign with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen." The simple phrasing goes straight to our hearts across the centuries. As it happens, this comment is being written on the seventeenth of July, 1943, and not for the first time the present writer is moved to add inwardly, *Sit anima mea cum Scillitanis!*

The duty of suffering, if need be, for the sake of one's convictions was not a new thing in the world. Some of the nobler philosophers had taught that a man's life should testify to his beliefs. Seneca once said of his friend the Cynic teacher, Demetrius of Sunium, that "he was not a teacher of truth, he was a witness to it." Musonius Rufus and Epictetus were never tired of urging that men must be prepared to endure ridicule, shame, imprisonment, exile, and even worse at the hands of the State in order to prove themselves faithful followers of truth on earth. And their words were not vain words. This high tradition was honored with more than eloquence. The shining example of Socrates was not forgotten. As for the Jews, though they were exempt from having to worship the emperor formally, in proof of their loyalty, they had an ancient and honorable record of martyrdom. In the "cloud of witnesses" to which the Church itself looked, as it faced its own struggles, were the martyrs who had lived by faith and died for the faith in and after the Maccabean war. The really new thing, however, in the case of these

Scillitan peasants was the vital and supreme expression of faith as devotion to Christ, which their sacred writings pressed upon the conscience. As it happens, this martyrdom is the earliest evidence for Christianity in North Africa. "Witness" bears its red sense of "martyr," a witness who resisted unto blood rather than compromise his loyalty to Jesus Christ the Lord. This company of provincials gave a practical definition of what their sacred records meant by "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." Christians are people ready to stake everything upon the conviction that Jesus Christ had been crucified and raised from death to be the living Lord of God's people. What they know of Him and what they owe to Him account for everything distinctive in their life and literature. They are prepared and glad not only to live by His rule and under the sway of His Spirit but, if need be, to suffer and die for His sake. Testimony to the Lord in word and deed, a living and loyal response to His revelation of God, is the beating pulse of their tradition; they rest their hopes for this world and the next on the assurance that He has triumphed over death.

## I

This heroic episode took place little more than half a century after most if not all of the books in the simple archives of the Scillitan church had been composed, and their composition falls within the sequel to the epichristian age. "Epichristian" is a term coined by De Quincey, the English essayist, for the period between the crucifixion and the fall of Jerusalem. In a paper on the Essenes he argued that the "particular age or generation (of twenty or thirty years, suppose) which witnesses the first origin

of any great idea, system, discovery, or revelation, rarely indeed witnesses the main struggle and opening rush of its evolution. Exactly as any birth promises vast results, for man, it may be expected to slumber and gather silently, like what housemaids call a gathering coal"; that is, in the homes of Victorian England a large piece of coal laid every morning upon the glowing embers of a fire, in order to make it burn slowly for hours until it blazes into full heat. This is one of the vulgarisms which sometimes fleck De Quincey's prose. "Then," he proceeds, "suddenly kindling and spreading by ratios continually accelerated, it rushes into the fulness of life with the hurry of a vernal resurrection in Sweden. Such a secondary generation, therefore, supervening upon the very earliest which dates from the first infant germs, is the season of true and virtual birth." Consequently, he adds, "I speak of all agencies that belonged to the primary movements of Christianity as epichristian, that is, as essentially forming elements in the original machinery through which that revelation revolved, though generally not coming into mature action until the generation that succeeds." The figures of speech are mixed, and the machinery metaphor is not happy, but the general idea underlying the passage is clear. And if anyone asks what all this has to do with the Essenes, De Quincey answers, "Much every way." The Essenes are described by Josephus (De Quincey's "Mr. Joe"), who never mentions Christians. Why? Because the former were simply Christians masquerading under a Jewish name, disguising themselves in Palestine for the sake of safety during the years preceding the downfall of Jerusalem. It was the wisdom of the serpent. They were a secret society propagating their character-

istic doctrines, as though they were no more than another Jewish sect, till such time as it was prudent for them to call themselves openly by their true title of Christians.

Absurd as this theory is, there is a germ of truth in De Quincey's general view of the second generation. An idea or cause in history becomes known only as it develops. Time is usually required before its essential features and forces are fully understood, even by its own adherents. Some of the supporters do not at first realize what is involved in their own heritage until they find themselves challenged by rival powers. Then it is that controversy may help to bring out more explicitly this or that element in the new faith, as it encounters criticism. Men become gradually conscious of their new position as it involves them in fresh applications of their principles, and exposes them to the task of interpreting to themselves as well as to others the characteristic truths for which they stand. Outside critics may sometimes see the implications of a movement before some of its own adherents become aware of what it means. There is a period of inward tension, during which the advocates of the cause are awakened more or less willingly and more or less thoroughly to the fact that, while a new tradition of religious life has much in common with the tradition which it supersedes, the vital issue lies in its differentia.

This is one of the themes in Luke's second volume, the difficulty felt by the primitive disciples at Jerusalem in realizing that the gospel was not a mere reform of Judaism but charged with dynamic power. How liberal Christians like Stephen, Peter, and Paul came to realize and enforce this, in various ways, is a clue to the book of Acts. But a curious parallel to De Quincey's chronology

occurs in the only allusion made to contemporary Christianity by a pagan writer, the historian Tacitus. He is describing the fire which damaged Rome in the summer of 64 A.D., when for a whole week in July the flames raged through all but four out of the fourteen districts of the city; three were totally destroyed. Possibly the future historian as a boy had witnessed the scene as he "stood at some lofty window and gazed out over the ocean of flame, where all the world seemed blazing in its final doom."<sup>10</sup> Writing of it half a century later, in connection with the career of Nero, he shows a scornful wonder. So Christianity still existed! For, to avoid suspicion of having engineered the fire in order to further his schemes for rebuilding the slums of the capital, "Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, some people who were detested anyhow for their abominable vices. The masses called them Christians, a name derived from Christ, who had suffered the penalty of death during the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate" about thirty-five years earlier. But "the pestilent superstition, though checked for the time being, broke out afresh, not only in Judea, where the mischief started, but also at Rome, where all manner of horrible and loathsome things pour in and become fashionable." Christ, it is implied, was simply another leader of revolt. The authorities thought they had disposed of him and his long ago; as Anatole France suggests in *Le Procureur de Judée*, Pilate himself may have forgotten all about him. But Tacitus was disgusted to find that this foreign weed had rallied and revived. It had actually sprung up inside the garden of the Roman world. Here the movement was, after more than



thirty years, serious enough to be accused of arson, evidently a force still to be reckoned with, at the very capital of the empire!

But we must close the epichristian era earlier than De Quincey imagines, if we are to include literature as well as life. In Luke's two volumes, which practically cover the epichristian activities of the movement, we miss much that was going on between 30 and 65 A.D. We learn nothing about how the faith reached Egypt or the Syrian east, for example; the career of St. Peter is mysteriously dropped midway, as mysteriously as the fate of Paul at Rome is left uncertain. Luke again is not interested in the inner life of the churches belonging to the Pauline mission field, and for some reason he never alludes to any of the apostle's letters. Yet it is with St. Paul's epistles, written in the late afternoon of his life, that primitive Christian literature begins. The evangelist does mention, in his preface, that a number of earlier gospels had been circulating, one of which must have been Mark's. We may conclude, therefore, that about 55 A.D. the real epichristian era ended. Which means that within the next half century, as the oral traditions passed from Aramaic into Greek, the four gospels were in existence, together with most of the main epistles and homilies—in all of which the genius of the new movement voiced itself. Spontaneously and suddenly they blossomed out of the tense life of Christian communities scattered round the shores of the Mediterranean. What happened during this period is practically unknown to us. Light begins to dawn upon Christian tradition and the spread of its missions, in Asia and elsewhere, only about the opening of the second century. But the one clear fact is the amazing fact that it

took no more than fifty years or thereabouts for documents to appear which were in due time, little as any of the writers anticipated this, to become the classical scriptures of Christendom.

## II

The flowering of literature inside a period of about fifty years, with a sudden rush of vitality, is far from being unusual in history. Four examples of the phenomenon are conspicuous.

Thus, during the second half of the fifth century B.C., the age of Pericles had been more than an epoch of great sculpture and architecture at Athens. By 404 indeed the Peloponnesian war had ended one phase of the city's political supremacy, and a few years later the martyrdom of Socrates followed. But the previous half century, with its rousing memories of the fight for freedom against Persia, had witnessed a unique stirring of the Greek mind in science and philosophy which threw up written masterpieces as one indication of a thrilling vitality within and outside Attica. What survives of the literature is sufficient to reveal the intensity of a period marked by the shining names of Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Cratinus, and Eupolis in drama; of Hellanicus, Herodotus, and Thucydides in history; of Antiphon, Andocides, and Lysias in oratory; of Anaxagoras, Parmenides, and Empedocles in philosophy. Also there was the lyric verse of men like Pindar, Bacchylides, and Timotheus.

Similarly, between 1580 and 1630, as England escaped the mental blight and the political menace of the counter-reformation on the Continent, factors like national self-confidence and a spirit of travel in uncharted realms of

thought no less than overseas inspired a bewildering profusion of literature. The recent past roused the genius of the country to develop its heritage. The Elizabethan age struck out new forms of satire and romance and even pamphleteering. But above all it blossomed with rich varieties in the prose of men like Bacon, Hooker, Lyly, Bishop Andrewes, Sidney, Raleigh, and Hakluyt (to name only seven) no less than in the poetry of Spenser, Davies, Drayton, Donne, Carew, Crashaw, Campion, and Herbert, although preeminently the luxuriance and enterprise of the English mind came out in the dramatic achievements of Marlowe, Peele, Ben Jonson, Dekker, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, and their fellows—at London, then the largest city in Europe. Besides that, there was a company of notable translators, who made England familiar with Homer, Ovid, Pliny, and Plutarch; with Ariosto, Tasso, and Montaigne; and with the Bible. Rarely had England ever been more patriotic, and seldom less insular.

As for France, she had a parallel phase in the following century, when the monarchy reached its zenith under Louis Quatorze. For, while the country was soon to suffer politically from the debasing effects of the regime, in its heyday, between the founding of the Academy till about 1686, French taste was predominant in Europe. France became conscious of new powers in her position until, partly aided by the encouragement of Fouquet and Colbert, culture produced a varied and vital literature. There was the consummate prose of Descartes and Pascal, and in their own way Bourdaloue, Bossuet, Claude, and Nicole wrote not less effectively than vivid spirits like Jean Balzac, La Bruyère, Fénelon, Fontenelle, Male-

branche, and La Rochefoucauld. As for the verse of Boileau and La Fontaine, the romances of Mademoiselle de Scudéry, Madame de Lafayette, and Cyrano de Bergerac, and the minor essayists, all is overshadowed by the classical drama of Corneille, Racine, Quinault, Regnard, and Molière. Some in the galaxy of authors, like Scarron, Perrault, and even Saint-Évremond, dipped into both verse and prose. Others contributed memoirs and letters. But all to some degree, even in coteries at Paris not uncritical of the Court, reflect the national revival, as though their pens on any subject were inspired by a pulsing spirit that possessed this half century of splendor.

Nearer to Christianity, however, lay the so-called Augustan period of Latin literature, between about 70 and 20 B.C. Unlike the age of Pericles, this period had no preeminence in drama or in history. The farces of Laberius and Publilius Syrus have not survived, nor has the later tragedy of Pollio or of Varius Rufus, Vergil's friend and editor. Many popular books on history have also perished, including the works of Pomponius Atticus (Cicero's publisher), Sisenna's history of his own times, and Pollio's sketch of the civil wars. True, there is more than a partial compensation in the first-class prose of Caesar himself, the eloquent monographs of Sallust, and a biographical fragment of Cornelius Nepos; also, although the book of Vitruvius on architecture is not literature, we have spread before us not only some pieces from the learned, voluminous Varro but God's plenty in the speeches, letters, and essays of Cicero. Nevertheless it was through verse, rather than prose, that the real achievement of this age was to be made. While much of its poetry, lyric, satiric,

and epigrammatic, has failed to reach us, more than enough of Ovid has floated down the stream, with the love poems of Tibullus and Propertius and the fables of Phaedrus. Such verse is minor, however, in comparison with the consummate poetry of the period. When so competent a judge as Professor Garrod, in his *Book of Latin Verse*, assures us that this half century contains "all that can be accounted indisputably great" in Roman poetry, he is thinking of the Roman genius displayed by Lucretius, Catullus, Vergil, and Horace, since the verse of these four, with all its qualities of passion and gravity, its virile tone, its urbanity, and its flashes of broad insight, may be said to belong "to those parts of literature which have served not merely to interest or to entertain, but to discipline, to fire, and to console the human race." And all this, at its best, was inspired not simply by relief from civil strife, as Augustus set the house of Rome in order, but by a serious if wistful sense of responsibility for creating a new order of justice and peace on earth under the sway of Rome's characteristic gift for government.

These parallels illustrate the truth that no great literature exists except in the wake of some great event or hope rousing a people. An epoch in literature that is creative implies some recent and powerful stirring of the imagination. What has been happening to the people is reflected and interpreted in various directions from a common center of unity. Matthew Arnold's first pages in his *Essays in Criticism* select the Athens of Pericles and the England of Queen Elizabeth as examples of such a time, when poets lived among "ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power." There is a mysterious movement of convictions or fresh thoughts in the

national atmosphere till these "finally reach society, the touch of truth is the touch of life, and there is a stir and growth everywhere." From such a spread and interplay of ideas and ideals the high literature emerges, in verse and prose. The masterworks of contemporary literature therefore are not a group or series of individual productions which happen to have been written at the time, almost simultaneously. Both their authors and their audiences were prepared by the surging spirit of the period. This is why the epichristian age precedes in large measure and even overlaps the half century of literary creation that follows for the Church, which then began to record and reflect upon its heritage.

In one respect, however, these four parallels only serve to bring out an unparalleled feature of the primitive Christian literature. Christianity had no Athens, no Rome, no London, no Paris. It had local centers like Antioch and Ephesus, with which tradition connects some of its earliest documents; but there was no national revival behind it, for even before its fall Jerusalem had ceased to be the sacred center of the new faith. No gospel was written there. No epistle of an apostle is known to have been written to the metropolis of Judaea or from it. "The Jerusalem which is above," not the Jerusalem in Palestine, "is our mother." While it remains true that the more closely we study this half century of Christian writing the more it turns out to be, on a small scale, a genuine example of what had happened and of what was to happen in Greece and Italy, in England and France, it is also an exceptional and amazing phenomenon that the literature sprang from an energy astir within the provinces or in scattered communities on the Mediterranean sea-

board which had no common tie of race or blood. These groups were not indeed independent conventicles. They had a unity of their own. Yet the great Deliverance which their writings commemorate was in a sphere without frontiers or capital. It was historical, but neither political nor national; the thrill<sup>11</sup> of it was for the wide world, for men of every tribe and tongue.

Admittedly these writings made no claim to be literature. The epistles and homilies were more or less occasional and in some cases even informal. But, as they were composed to be read aloud, they were in a sense published, since one normal method of publishing in the ancient world was for the author to have his book first read aloud to a sympathetic group or audience. Also, their literary quality is not to be belittled. They reveal three great thinkers, the apostle Paul, the genius who wrote Hebrews, and the enigmatic John of Asia Minor. Strictly speaking, we cannot say that the authors of the gospels were literary persons. None of them, not even Luke, sat down to compile a biography as Sallust did, or Plutarch, or Suetonius. Yet great literature is often produced by men who are not literary persons. John Bunyan was not an author, as some of his contemporaries were; he moved in a very different circle from that of Samuel Butler or Dryden or Hobbes. But *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a prose classic, alive with supreme imagination and couched in superb English. So with the gospels. Their authors had no notion of composing literature or of winning the plaudits of the religious public. They were too occupied with what they had to pass on to their readers or hearers in the churches, too absorbed in their subject, to think of themselves. Hardly one of them is known to us. It is quite uncertain where

and how any of their works rose or was circulated, before they came to be selected from other memoranda of Jesus and collected into the canon. More than is the case with the epistles, they were survivors of a larger literature which we know simply from fragments or by tradition.<sup>12</sup> Yet they are not an accumulation of literary units; each has its aim and plan. Furthermore, it is not enough to say that they were accepted by the cult; they were written for the cult, in order to stir and sustain the faith of a living fellowship with a mission to men. They slipped quietly into the world to do no more than this, and it proved to be the making of what mankind allows to be nothing less than a sacred book of literature.

From one point of view the New Testament may be said to have carried on a tradition as it took shape and form. The very fact of its indebtedness to the Hebrew scriptures is significant. The Church's book is a sequel which is independent of its predecessor in form and spirit as well as indebted to it. Both Jews and Christians read the Old Testament. Both were inspired by it. But Christians followed it up with a small group of writings which not only ranked for them before long as equally sacred but were in their own way equally entitled to rank as great literature. The late Mr. Claude Montefiore wrote a book on *The Old Testament and After*, showing with historical insight how some of the better elements in rabbinism were implicit in the New Testament as well as in the Old. He had a good case, and he made it. But so far as literature is concerned, it is another matter altogether. Mr. Montefiore's title raises a question to which there is but one answer. While the Mishna was a timely and effective series of tracts for the reorganization of Judaism, neither



in form nor in content is it on the level of the Old Testament, any more than writings like the epistle of Barnabas, the Shepherd of Hermas, or the Preaching of Peter are on the level of the New Testament literature. Set aside the Christian scriptures which eventually passed into the canon of the New Testament, and the Old Testament with Malachi, as the Church does, or with Second Chronicles, as the synagogue does, and what has the Mishna to offer by way of a sequel that would not be an anticlimax? After the great literature of the Old Testament what? Not surely the Chagiga. Not the Berakhoth. Not even the Pirke Aboth or the Sayings of the Fathers, although for nine centuries it has supplied the Jewish liturgy with lessons of religious counsel and guidance. There was indeed some writing of a literary character between 55 and 105 A.D. from men who still thought and wrote about their faith in the Law with the free spirit of normal Judaism. Some were Hellenists who interpreted it for purposes of propaganda. Apologetic interests inspired even verse, as in the fourth book of the Sibylline Oracles; but for the most part it was the popular prose of books purporting to come from Ezra and Baruch and also a treatise like the fourth book of Maccabees, which glorified the Maccabean martyrs in order to encourage Jews to resist persecution. The predominance of rabbinism excluded such apocalyptic pieces, however. Like the works of Philo and Josephus, they were preserved by Christians, who sometimes even edited them. But none became authoritative for the synagogue. It was the twenty-seven books of the New Testament collection, large and small, designed for the needs of fellowship and worship within the early communities of Christendom, that finally, in the wake of the

Old Testament, became part of the world's great literature, destined, we may in all seriousness claim, "to discipline, to fire, and to console the human race" in a deeper and wider sense than any masterpieces of Latin verse. They were to prove a medium of strength and vision for mankind in their collective witness.

### III

At this point the originality and virility of Christian tradition may be seen emerging. For Christianity rose out of a more corporate and religious environment than the oral teaching and schools of Greek philosophy, even when that philosophy undertook to help men who were concerned about questions of moral and spiritual welfare. Josephus might talk to the Roman world about the varied "philosophy" of Jewish parties; but for Judaism the knowledge of God was essentially "tradition," imparted by God to His people and then handed down from generation to generation. As Christianity inherited this truth and developed it, the very terms acquired fresh force and point, however. At such decisive epochs of change, one must have an ear sensitive to new undertones and overtones in this or that familiar phrase. Otherwise language may be a misleading expression of actual life.

Echoes of "paradosis," as we have already noted, are to be expected in the Pauline letters. The writer had been trained in the rabbinic schools and their mission propaganda. But the Greek term here is not always an exact equivalent for "tradition," any more than in the dialogues of Plato. Thus, a few months after founding the first important church in Europe, when the apostle had to write a second letter to the Thessalonians, he

warned some against the "disorderly" habit of dropping their daily work in excitement over the prospect of the second Advent being near. This he pronounced to be out of line with "the rule you received from us" apostles. Again, more generally, he wrote, "Because God hath chosen you to salvation through belief of the truth, therefore hold the rules which you have learned from us orally or by letter." In both cases the Vulgate renders "paradosis" by "tradition." So does our standard English Bible. But here the term means "rule" or, as in the Genevan version, "instruction," regulations which elsewhere he called his Christian "ways" of living; that is, directions about the conduct of Church members which the apostle had either originated or sanctioned in the course of his mission. The converts at Thessalonica had no books on the faith. They had "paradosis" in the Platonic sense of the word, oral rules for life. On the other hand, "tradition" suits the usage in First Corinthians xi. 2 ("I praise you for maintaining the traditions I passed on to you") much better than the Vulgate's "praecepta," in the light of verse 23 ("I passed on to you what I received from the Lord"), where the context of the verb, as in xv. 1-3, is decisive; Christians have halakha of their own in the apostolic tradition or testimony of the Lord Jesus. The Lord's supper and the Lord's resurrection are fundamental traditions. The apostle writes as one trained in the conception which underlies the opening words of the Pirke Aboth. "Moses received the Torah from [God on] Sinai, and delivered it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets." The difference is that, for the Church, Christ is now the Torah, the final revelation which determines worship and

which His disciples and apostles transmit to the real People or Israel of God.

## IV

When one early Christian writer claimed more glory for Christ than for Moses, not only because Moses had witnessed to the coming revelation of the Lord but because "Moses was faithful" in the House of God "as a servant, Christ as a son over it," and when Spinoza<sup>18</sup> acknowledged that what had been revealed to Christ came to him more directly than to Moses, this made explicit the truth underlying a central passage of the primitive records, where an impassioned soliloquy expresses the faith of Christ.

No more striking illustration of the new force put into the tradition idea is to be found than in the gospel saying, "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and revealed them to the simple-minded; yes, Father, for such was thy gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, neither does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." It is the Hebrew conception of revelation as truth imparted by God, but the singular thing is that the Greek tradition verb is employed. Now "deliver" in this metaphorical sense never occurs in the Greek Old Testament, where, as in nearly all the New Testament, it means literally surrender, yield, betray, or hand over. The English reader is apt to miss this singular point. True, there are hints of the metaphorical sense in some circles of the Hermetic mysticism, just as there

is a curious "praeparatio evangelica" in the pre-Christian notion of a divine father imparting instruction to his son by way of initiation into the mysteries of a cult.<sup>14</sup> But here, at the very center of Christianity, we come upon the common tradition verb being employed for the uncommon, unique, and personal endowment of Christ with authoritative revelation. The same word, but what a world of difference! The knowledge is not information about the divine being or purpose but the revelation that comes through intimate personal communion; it is a revelation that no longer flows along the channels of formal tradition but through the full and final disclosure of the Father in the Son, brought within reach of simple people on the simplest level instead of being transmitted through scribal experts.

Sometimes this belief was echoed in the very language afterward used about the preaching of the gospel. Thus, when one writer refers to the faith as "this law of God, given for all the world," defining it at once as "God's Son preached from one end of the earth to another," or when an apologist claims that "an everlasting, final, perfect law is given to us, even Christ, after which there shall be no other law," it is error to regard such passages as signs of incipient legalism; they simply reaffirm the belief that Jesus Christ is for Christians all and more than all that contemporary rabbis were claiming on behalf of the Torah.<sup>15</sup> But originally this conviction was simply put by Jesus Himself, as He encountered the traditions which had gathered round the Torah in his own day.

All parties and orders within Judaism had their oral traditions. Without these no Jew could have lived in line with the faith of his fathers. The Essenes, as we know,

had special and independent traditions of their own. Even the Sadducees had unwritten traditions, though these were secondary to the Torah. When we are told that they held "there was no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit," this does not mean that they disbelieved in angels altogether, for the Torah is full of angelic apparitions. What they discredited was the elaborated angelology of the later Pharisaic teaching. It was with the traditions of the Pharisees, however, that our Lord came into conflict. He himself worshiped not only in the temple but in the synagogue, it is true, and the synagogue was based entirely on tradition. When he paid the half-shekel tax for the temple, when he appealed to the principle that it was lawful to save life on the sabbath, he was acknowledging provisions of the oral law. Yet he had to challenge some of these, to the indignation of the religious leaders, and he did so "with authority." When he said of and to the Pharisees:

"This people honours me with their lips,  
but their heart is far away from me;  
vain is their worship of me,  
for the doctrines they teach are but human precepts,"

he was indeed echoing Isaiah's scathing verdict on some of his contemporaries in Jerusalem of old, whose religion had been no more than a "mockery, a mere tradition learned by rote"; he spoke as a prophet, but as more than a prophet. His revelation consisted indeed of more than words; there was his free attitude toward "sinners," his claim to pardon people, his power of exorcism, of healing, of cleansing the temple. The Pharisees were not concerned to know why and how his teaching differed from

that of the scribes. They felt that he was more than a rival interpreter. "By what authority?" was their question, as he spoke and acted. It could not be answered at the moment; but it raised the supreme issue between them and him, as, for example, he insisted that the supreme obligation was an absolute love for God and man, a love for God which meant devotion to His interests in human personality. Jesus would permit no scribal tradition of the day, not even the Torah itself, to override this consideration. Nothing, however pious or plausible, must be allowed to stand in the way of a devotion to God which showed itself in human dutifulness and kindness. Here, the Pharisees rightly suspected, was a new, authoritative interpretation of true religion, which implied a mission or commission far above any fresh view of the Torah and tradition. "The queen of the south came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, and, behold a greater than Jonah is here." It makes no difference whether the Greek neuter is rendered, here and elsewhere ("I tell you, a greater than the temple is here"), by "something" or by "One"; for the "something" is the kingdom of God which the Lord is conscious of representing as the Son of man, the Christ, God's Son and Servant. He is the supreme satisfaction of man's quest for knowledge and also the supreme challenge to man's conscience. The various strata of tradition<sup>18</sup> concur in showing that he was from the first believed to have spoken and acted with divine authority to carry out the order of the kingdom, which was superior to the Law itself.

## V

The outcome of this Messenger and his Message was the passion and resurrection. The apostles bore testimony to a Jesus Christ who had himself borne witness to the gracious purpose of God the Father by laying down his life. The testimony of Jesus, borne in word and deed, was the spirit of prophecy, the inspiration of all who owned Him as Lord, and were called to speak of Him to the churches. This naturally made the Christian recognition of Him very different from the obedience and honor paid by Jews to their Torah, for now self-sacrifice was revealed in the heart of God. Had Christ then come to fulfill the messianic hope? Or was He the suffering servant? The revelation anyhow was of One who had lived to die for God's redeeming will, and who lived to be the Lord and Leader of God's people. Such was the subject and object of Christian testimony, amid all the varieties of belief and the crosscurrents of practice. It inspires the martyr. It is the fundamental theme of gospels and epistles alike. The question of questions raised by the gospel was concerned with the standards in obedience to which men are approved in the sight of God, not with any sort of opinions or actions by which they are good enough (in either sense of the phrase) to approve of Him. These standards were bound up with the nature of His revealed will in Christ as the risen Redeemer, the savior and the judge of men. A critical investigation of the gospels confronts us with One who believed himself to be organically united to the divine purpose, and who was believed to have died in order to realize it for the world, not merely as a personal savior but as the divine agent in creation. There was no



other way for sin and evil to be overcome. In the epistles we overhear the faithful thrilling with this belief, moved by the joy of it or the mystery of it, endeavoring to find words and ideas for its expression. Some conceptions seem to prove more lasting than others. But all are stirred by the same central figure.

Today we are able to hold this view in a less mechanical sense than used to be the case. It is even possible to reaffirm, in the light of modern investigation, what some thinkers of an earlier period saw afar off. Listen, for example, to a couple of great Christians on this point. What they say may sound no more than unintelligent harmonizing or exaggerated emphasis upon superficial resemblances. Here is Luther telling a congregation at Christmas, "You must banish from your minds the notion that to hear the epistles of Saint Paul or of Saint Peter is not to hear the gospel. Never allow the term 'epistle' to mislead you. All that Saint Paul writes in his epistles is pure gospel, as he himself declares in Romans i.1 and First Corinthians iv.15. Indeed I venture to say that the gospel is more clear and vivid in Saint Paul's epistles than in the four evangelists. For what is the gospel but the message that Christ has given Himself for us, to redeem us from sins, so that all who believe shall surely be saved?" Or take Jeremy Taylor's more balanced reminder that the object of the gospels is the same as "the short and admirable mysterious creed of Saint Paul" in Romans x.9, as well as of Saint Peter and Saint John, whose essence is that "nothing is of prime and original necessity to be believed but this Jesus Christ our Redeemer."<sup>17</sup> Criticism of the gospel<sup>18</sup> traditions, as they took form, is beginning to show that such statements are not so sweep-

ing and one-sided as they appear to be. The epistles belong to communities where these evangelic traditions originated, and where they not only were shaped into various forms for edification and apologetic purposes but shaped life from the very outset. Differences of expression are often sharp, and sometimes perplexing. Yet on the whole most of them now turn out to converge upon a certain unity of interest, presupposed in both gospels and epistles, which implies some authentic, original belief in a divine Lord whose "kingdom" had a redemptive significance.

## CHAPTER III

### From One Generation to Another

WHEN the devil fought to retain his hold of "the fair and delicate town" of Mansoul, he had no difficulty in capturing "three young fellows" who had recently volunteered to defend the cause of God. The first of the trio was Mr. Tradition. The prisoners had not the least hesitation in transferring their services to the devil, for, as they frankly admitted, they were soldiers of fortune rather than of faith. It is to be feared that this represents Bunyan's considered estimate of what tradition meant in Christianity. He allows that Mr. Tradition and his companions, Mr. Human-Wisdom and Mr. Human-Invention, were "proper men and men of courage and skill," but caustically adds "to appearance." They were assigned to the regiment of Captain Anything, "a great doer in the town of Mansoul," where the first two were promoted to be sergeants and Mr. Human-Invention became a standard-bearer; but we hear no more of them in *The Holy War*. The bulletins of the siege never mention their names. Apparently they proved to be of as little use to the one side as to the other. Such was Bunyan's picturesque way of suggesting that tradition in all its associations was a human device, usually to be found in opposition to the good cause, and even there of small account.

We cannot accept this naïve reading of history, how-

ever—no, not although it happens to be repeated by a contemporary archangel. Listen to Michael in the twelfth book of *Paradise Lost*, as he offers Adam a preview of church history. Milton does treat tradition more gravely, but at the same time he sees nothing in it except an anti-Christian aberration, a mystery of iniquity which had prevailed for centuries, ever since the doctrine and story of the apostles had been announced in holy writ and “left only in these written records pure.” No sooner had this been done than selfish, ambitious authorities of the early Church started to taint the deposit “with superstitions and traditions” of ecclesiastical ceremonies. Of late, however, there were signs that gospel truth had begun to be more clear and clean; the upright no longer sought out many inventions; here and there the penumbra of tradition was yielding to rays of the free Spirit. And so on. During this lecture Eve had been asleep. We cannot but feel that what she missed was some stately verse rather than any serious account of history.

In spite of noble lines and quaint prose allegory, the plain fact remains that from the very first Christianity and tradition had lived together for better and worse. The one is unintelligible apart from the other. The records of the relationship certainly disclose phases in which traditional developments threatened to warp and even to distort the Christian cause. Yet the ages depend on one another, and in a world which the poet interpreted as “to good malignant, to bad men benign,” the faith would never have reached Bunyan or himself unless tradition had played a much more vital role on the side of gospel truth than either of these good men was able to recognize. The passage of Christianity across the centuries lay out-

side the interests and vision of their religious genius. Tradition did not thrill them. It made them shudder.

The reason for this becomes clear when one bears in mind that "tradition" meant for Protestants primarily a system of indulgences and penance which compromised the truth of the gospel. This conviction was of overwhelming religious power. As the Augsburg Confession (xv) had explained, minor traditional usages are permissible if they "promote peace and good order in the Church"; but no quarter is to be given to "human traditions instituted to propitiate God, to merit grace, and to make satisfaction for sins." When "tradition" had been taken in this special sense of an elaborate substitute for God's direct pardon and peace, we understand how a passionate revulsion from it was the negative side of an adoring concentration upon the unearthly glory of the Lord in the gospels and epistles as the one Redeemer. No wonder that tradition seemed something mediaeval and irrelevant that had distorted this, not a process which had transmitted the very power of recovering it. Yet tradition in its original and broader sense of a witness to the living Lord, in darkness as well as in light, is not to be ignored. We cannot disinherit ourselves by declining to take account of its functions during the long interval between ourselves and its first phases within the Church of our fathers. One party of the day held that traditions about dogmas, rites, and Scripture deserved all acceptance, since Mother Church vouched for them. The antithesis to such a pretension is not to reject the items in mass, but to test every one fairly and faithfully before trusting any. False claimants to the title of tradition have to be challenged; that is all.

I

The noun "paradosis" is most infrequent in Jewish Greek, where it only occurs a few times in the Septuagint, invariably as a literal term for surrendering a town or delivering a prisoner to punishment. Even in Philo there is practically but one certain use of the word, in a plea (*Special. Legibus* iv.28) that children ought to adhere to the unwritten habits of the home. "Customs are unwritten laws," the Alexandrian sage remarks, "rules laid down by men of old which are not inscribed on monuments or on sheets of papyrus, to become moth-eaten, but on the minds of those who share the same social order. Children should inherit from their parents not only property but ancestral customs; and they ought not to disregard these on the ground that what is thus handed down to them [literally, their 'paradosis'] is unwritten." The noun is equally rare in the apologists of the second century, and strangely enough it has no Christian associations there; Justin once mentions rabbinic traditions and Tatian alludes to Greek traditions, but that is all. Elsewhere and later, however, the word is as dominant as its Latin equivalent "tradition."<sup>19</sup>

The two primary ideas of tradition in technical terms were: (a) the "traditio constitutiva," the authentic apostolic message of faith; and (b) the "traditio continuiva," or rule of faith, subsequently drawn up by the Church as a convenient manual, more effective than Scripture for ordinary believers. All, orthodox and heretics, appealed to Scripture, and the religious conservatism of an age when sharp transitions and sharper controversies were afoot made for some such central statement about where and

how the apostolic faith was to be found. From Irenaeus and Tertullian onward this became one pressing reason for a creed as well as for a canon of Scripture. The oral tradition thus passed into some written forms. But prior to all this lay a period when the oral tradition included personal recollections of the Lord and His first apostles, which were still accessible. Bishop Papias of Hierapolis in the beginning of the second century welcomed every chance of hearing such recollections, though he had the written gospels. Hegesippus, the Jewish Christian, traveled in search of them, to confirm his faith. Both men wrote books on tradition which unluckily have perished. For them tradition had no mere romantic interests; it reassured them about their heritage in view of the imminent End.

In another and more vital line, tradition meant usages of worship and polity which were instituted by the churches. Some of these lasted longer than others. The love feast, for example, was soon dropped, with the holy kiss. Ministries of healing, ministries of women, had their more or less temporary popularity. The rich life of the fellowship threw up varied practices like the sign of the cross, forms of devotion at baptism, confirmation, and the eucharist, many of which went back to some dogmatic causes, for the sacraments were specially the source of development in this direction.

Christianity has never been a Levitical representation of first- or second-century ideas and rites. It did not enter the world with anything corresponding to a book of Deuteronomy, containing a newly discovered code of worship and polity for the Church which could be imposed on the various nations of Syria, Egypt, Africa, and the

Levant. It was, as it is, a spontaneous growth which, though nourished by the classical traditions and Scriptures of its past, continues to catch its full life from the common fellowship, the mutual enterprise, the interchange of ideas, and the humble self-sacrifice which throbs within the vital intercourse of contemporary life. A church, like a people, absorbs what is most vital to its constitution along many a channel, new and old. It is indeed one service of authentic tradition to maintain the identity of the Church by upholding its cardinal principles, so that it never becomes a syncretism or a loose conglomerate of notions and usages floating in its environment at any stage. The distinctive testimony of Jesus, at the heart of this living tradition, guarantees it against any such distortion or transformation, as the records of the New Testament already indicate.

## II

One tradition had to be broken by the apostle Peter himself. He had somehow begun to feel uneasy about abstaining from intercourse with believers who had not been born Jews. As the conviction was repressed, it awakened dreams of its fulfillment; and one of these is recorded in the book of Acts, where in a vision he saw a sheet let down from heaven full of animals, reptiles, and birds; that is, including food ritually unclean for a Jew to eat. The command came, "Rise, kill, and eat." Instantly Peter said, "Not so, Lord. No, no, my Lord; I have never eaten anything common or unclean." Eventually he acted on the message of the trance and began to associate freely with non-Jews in the interests of the gospel, though not freely enough to please his fellow apostle Paul. But at



first the old tradition about avoiding uncircumcised persons prompted him to shrink from the liberal attitude which Jesus himself had enjoined. "I have never done such a thing" was the reason for hesitating. The hold of the old was not to be relaxed at once; though in the end he was to be "not disobedient to the heavenly vision," the initial sight of a new step to be taken was met by the cry, echoed by many after him in unapostolic succession, "Not so, Lord; I have never done" this before. The story of the early controversy over the rise of Gentile Christianity is a proof of the vital power, inherent in the Christian tradition, to pass through novel, trying phases of growth with renewed consciousness of its true self.

Another case of the tradition encountering a rival tradition, this time outside its own borders, is equally significant. When St. Peter, or whoever wrote in his name, reminds his readers that they had been emancipated, "ransomed by the precious blood of Christ," he does not add, as St. Paul might have done, "from the Law." These Asiatic Christians had been born in paganism. So the apostle explains that the emancipation was "from the futile traditions of your past" (*"paternae traditionis"*). He calls the traditions "futile" because they could not avail to produce any real faith or hope toward God. But in one sense they were far from futile. Even those who abandoned the synagogue were cursed as renegades, and exposed to severe social pressure for giving up the time-honored customs of their fathers in order to join an upstart minority. The prospect of excommunication and even of worse must have deterred or at least deferred many would-be sympathizers with the gospel. And Romans or Greeks, disposed to accept membership in the

Church, faced a similar, though more subtle, difficulty. Clement of Alexandria met Egyptians who pleaded, "But it is unreasonable to upset any custom handed down to us by our fathers." In the charming dialogue of Minutius Felix a cultured Roman citizen asks his Christian friend, "How much more respectful, how much better it is, to accept the teaching of our ancestors, to revere our traditional religions, to worship gods whom from the very cradle we have been taught to fear." Yet this was written nearly a century later than the first epistle of Peter, and it is rather remarkable that during the interval, apart from some allusions in the records of martyrdom, we find no direct references to the wrench which must have been felt by many throughout the empire who had to face ostracism and scorn, if not more serious hardship, for abandoning their traditional beliefs in favor of so recent and revolutionary a cult as Christianity. Perhaps the nearest analogy is to be found in the modern mission field, especially among Hindus or Muslims, where those who are inclined to identify themselves with the Christian faith meet the powerful deterrent of having to break with the social nexus of an ancestral religion whose traditions enter into the very fiber of the local civilization.

But on went the Christian tradition, and as it went it ceased to be entirely oral. Here the problem of the relation between the spoken and the written revelation was raised. The earliest allusion is in Luke's preface to his historical account of Jesus and the primitive Church. The author's reason for writing is to let his friend Theophilus "know the solid truth of what you have been taught" or informed already by instructors in the faith. The term "solid truth" or certainty is the last word in

the Greek sentence, and it falls with weight. What in an ordinary writer might be a stylistic mannerism is here as deliberate as Luke's choice of the last word for his second volume. In both cases he picks and places a word for the sake of emphasis. It would be reading too much into the preface to suppose that the phrase implies any direct reflection upon Luke's many predecessors in writing a gospel narrative, or upon the religious facts as "handed down by the original eyewitnesses." When Theophylact, the learned Bulgarian archbishop of the eleventh century, wrote his commentary on the third gospel, he explained that Luke must have been aware that oral tradition or hearsay is not sufficient for real convictions about the gospel. "We men often are in the habit of suspecting what a man tells us; but when he writes it down, we have more confidence." Such an interpretation of the prologue has been frequently favored, for various reasons. Yet it is one-sided. There is no suggestion that the written record is a safeguard against hearsay and rumor circulating either to the credit or to the discredit of Christianity, much less that it is to serve as the secondary substitute for an oral tradition of the apostles which had some special validity on the score of its priority and range. All that can be fairly inferred is the assumption that such a careful, comprehensive record as Luke claims to have written forms a natural means of ensuring more definitely for some of his contemporaries the truth which in its earlier stages had been transmitted by word of mouth. It is tradition on what is understood to be a further level of certainty. The author implies that what he writes has at least no less authority and is no less conclusive than what had been originally oral testimony.

In the epistles, the other literary form of the apostolic testimony, a similar assumption is overheard, never more clearly than in the opening of the first epistle of John. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life . . . we declare to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you, that your joy may be full." It makes no difference whether we read "your joy" or "our own joy." The oral tradition of the primitive faith passes into writing with unabated power. The original and classical testimony is transmitted in a new, definite form, that fresh generations may share it, and transmitted with a joy shared by writer and readers alike:

For what delights can equal those  
That stir the spirit's inner deeps,  
When one that loves but knows not, reaps  
A truth from one who loves and knows?

The assurance that this testimony has not suffered in the course of oral tradition is repeated by the writer to the Hebrews. His own description of the gospel, he declares, is of "a salvation which was originally proclaimed by the Lord himself and guaranteed to us," who are at some distance from it, "by those who heard him, while God corroborated their testimony with signs and wonders and a variety of miraculous powers, distributing the Holy Spirit as it pleased him."

The mention of the Spirit recurs in another connection. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," said Jesus, at

some moments of specially important teaching. It was not said by way of permission or suggestion; it was a quiet demand for attention to His message, as emphatic as the repetition of "But I say to you" in the Sermon on the Mount. Some have ears only for echoes. Others, only for what is obvious and undisturbing. He claims from His disciples an immediate hearing for His direct revelations of the gospel, as they sounded mysterious. Later on, the prophet John was inspired to say the same, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," the nearest New Testament approach to the Old Testament phrase "Thus saith the Lord." When the oral teaching took written form as scripture, read by the worshiping communities, the summons of the Lord continued to be one of the divine oracles, and the inspired prophet attested the tradition.

But there is a more definite statement on the relation between the Spirit and tradition. According to the writer who composed the pastoral epistles in the name of Paul, the apostle used a Greek word (*parathêkê*) for the purpose of denoting what he committed to the Lord, his very self and soul, his mission and his eternal interest. "I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have entrusted to Him against [or till] that Day," the final day of reckoning. The metaphor reflects here the Greek and Roman custom of depositing valuables in a temple or sanctuary for safekeeping. But commonly money or property was committed to a neighbor or friend, to be reclaimed when the owner returned from a journey. To be unfaithful about such a deposit was regarded as a heinous offense on the part of the trustee; besides, it was a breach of confidence and honor if one repudiated

responsibility or misappropriated funds of which one had agreed to take care. Twice the apostle uses the term in this sense, of what God had entrusted to the apostles and their successors; namely, the precious faith of the gospel tradition. The Greek word for this trust might be rendered "deposit," as in Latin, were it not that the English word might suggest silt or debris; it has associations of a sediment or precipitate of mud or clay as well as of gold or silver. Practically it was a juristic term of finance for what we mean by "securities"; and in both passages *parathêkê* refers to the truth of the apostolic preaching, which had to be preserved intact for future generations. Negatively, the apostles were held responsible for transmitting this unimpaired, since it was not a clever improvisation or brilliant speculation of their own but a revelation entrusted to them by God. As the writer of the epistle to Diognetus (vii) afterward argued that Christians "have had no earthly discovery transmitted to them, and are not careful to guard any mortal invention," so Paul adjures his disciple Timotheus, "Guard the securities of the faith intact; avoid the profane jargon and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge." To some scholars, like Dr. Hort in his *Judaistic Christianity* (pp. 135-143), this sounds like a warning against the contemporary Jewish methods of developing tradition in the Mishna; the contradictions are supposed to be the opposing interpretations of Scripture and conflicting decisions of the wise men or *halakha* experts, from the schools of Hillel and Shammai downward, while the myths and genealogies and trashy fables mentioned by Paul in the pastoral epistles allude to the rank growth of legendary tradition about the pedigrees

of the patriarchs in the haggada or midrashic literature of the synagogue. This may well be so. The pastoral epistles date from the last quarter of the first century, when rabbis like Jochanan ben Zakkai, Tarphon, and Zadok were active in restating Jewish belief against Christianity. But in any case the positive side of the description is plain, the reminder that the divine trust or tradition is to be handed on by means of reliance on the divine Spirit. "These instructions I transmit to you, Timotheus my son. Model yourself on the sound instruction you have had from me in the faith and love of Christ Jesus. Guard the great securities of your faith intact, by aid of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us" Christians. The last words are vague, but they are significant. The one method of guarding the sacred deposit or securities from harm and loss is to live a life sensitive to the pulse and impulse of the Holy Spirit within the community of the faithful; this alone produces in the apostolic succession a vigilant care for what is vital to the faith.<sup>20</sup> We may speak of a fixed body of doctrine beginning to emerge at this period, but the body had a Spirit. We may speak of tradition shaping itself more formally than before, but it was not yet thought enough to repeat a mere form of words in order to conserve the sacred trust of the gospel. To put it briefly, while rabbinic Jews claimed, as we have seen, that their own sages or scribes who pored over the Torah had fallen heirs to the spirit of prophecy, Christians maintained that the content and channel of their apostolical gospel for all the world owed its health to the indwelling Spirit of the living God. It was no pious phraseology when writers from Tertullian to Jerome urged that the Spirit was

the one Vicar of Christ in the Church of God, and one of the true services rendered by J. A. Moehler in his *Einheit in der Kirche* was to recall Christians to the Spirit's functions in the sphere of church tradition.

It must be admitted that one passage proved a fertile seed of faith and fancies about oral tradition. Luke opened his second volume by mentioning a singular Jerusalemite tradition that Jesus "after his passion showed himself alive by many proofs, appearing to the apostles whom he had chosen during forty days and speaking of what concerned the kingdom of God." So the new and true Torah was revealed as the older Torah had been, in an interval of forty days. Forty was a sacred number; it was also a round number, but our fathers in the Church took it literally and by the fourth century fixed the festival of the Ascension on the fortieth day after Easter. Forty days, however, was not long enough for some earlier groups of Egyptian gnostics, like the Valentinians and the Ophites, who required eighteen months, while the circles from which the miscellany of the Pistis Sophia emerged found eleven years all too little for the Lord to have disclosed their complete theosophy. As for the contents of the instructions imparted by the risen Lord, early Christians like Chrysostom were properly reserved—for the most part confining them to the topics hinted in the following five verses. But once oral tradition became equal to Scripture as a source of revelation, "what concerned the kingdom of God" could be made to cover all details of ecclesiastical policy and polity. Even a learned Saxon scholar like Schoettgen in the eighteenth century was emphatic on this point, rejoicing to think that Jesus then and there must have authorized His followers to



substitute the Christian Sunday for the Jewish sabbath. It was no wonder, then, that inside the Roman section of Western Catholicism, after the Council of Trent, this allusion to a pregnant interval was one of the passages taken to imply that the decrees and decisions of the Church up to and after Trent were merely revelations which unfolded what had been originally deposited in the mind of Mother Church. Dogmas and rites for which no biblical proof was forthcoming were sanctioned by such a significant reference. What mattered the insufficient and doubtful data of Scripture, or even the silence of Scripture on any issue of Roman belief or practice, when Mother Church had been entrusted with the full apostolic gospel?

On the other hand, so far from oral tradition being assumed to be more reliable than the written word, there is one striking case of its being corrected. In the appendix to the fourth gospel the writer refers to a story, current among his contemporaries, which rested on a misconception of what Jesus had actually said about the beloved disciple. "This saying," he points out, was not exactly what the brotherhood supposed it to be, a prediction that the said disciple would survive to see the second Advent. They were mistaken, and he writes to supply the true version. Even at this early period it appears that oral tradition was not necessarily free from misinterpretations of the Lord's teaching, and that the written record might be required to preserve and attest the original tradition. Oral is one thing; original is another.

## III

No torch of knowledge has yet thrown light upon the precise contour of tradition in the second century. Its relation to the written word is not ambiguous, but its connections with the rise of confessions and rules of faith are indistinct. It is all the more welcome, therefore, to find the surprising fact that, as it happens, one ray of light is cast on tradition by a document which does not belong to the central or catholic Church. About the middle of the second century a Christian lady called Flora found difficulties in reading her New Testament, especially when she studied Christ's teaching about the Old Testament law. She consulted a friend called Ptolemaeus, and his reply <sup>21</sup> has fortunately been preserved. Ptolemaeus may have been the martyr, mentioned by Justin Martyr, who was put to death at the instigation of an irate pagan whose wife had been won over to the faith by this Christian. Martyr or not, he was a scholar of singular penetration. As a pupil of Heracleon he belonged to the Valentinians, who afterward developed a mythological philosophy of religion; but there is no mythology about this letter. It is a clear analysis of the strata in the gospel records which is far ahead of anything produced by Catholics of the period, or, at any rate, extant in their literature. But the most notable feature of the tract is that Ptolemaeus, besides using the epistles as a genuine interpretation of the gospel, is relying on "the apostolic tradition"; he invites Flora to "test every argument by the teaching of our Saviour. . . . I base my arguments and proofs on the words of our Saviour, which alone enable us to arrive safely at any knowledge of reality."

Here the gospel teaching is linked to the apostolic tradition. Had we the lost books of Papias and Hegesippus, we might be able to judge how far this synthesis was current among Christians of the period. It is certainly remarkable that Ptolemaeus, a left-wing Christian, testifies to such a conviction in his frank appreciation of the Savior's teaching.

It was the gnostics who introduced the idea that Christ had conveyed secret mysteries to the apostles, appealing to a man like Matthias as well as to special reporters of Paul and Peter. Often these gnostic philosophies were based on the parables. But Origen was right when he indignantly replied to Celsus (i.7) that Christianity was no secret religion. "Why," he protested, "nearly all the world is more familiar with what Christians preach than with the favorite opinions of philosophers. To talk of Christian dogma as a secret system is utterly absurd" in days when the Virgin Birth, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the last judgment are topics of scorn among pagans. Yet how little we learn from Origen himself about tradition! All that the great scholar can tell us is that he knew there were four gospels, and only four, by tradition. In all likelihood we must suppose that although the Church had not as yet any definite canon of its Scriptures, nor even a fixed baptismal confession, it possessed enough of both for the maintenance of the faith against rival theories and heretical criticism.<sup>22</sup> The latter worked out a theory of tradition which so far agreed with that of the Church. Apostolic tradition was necessary. Granted. The apostles did not know everything or, if they did, they did not disclose all they knew, nor did they impart it to all and sundry. The gnostics,

however, prided themselves on possessing a traditional interpretation superior to that of the Church, since they could appeal to apostolic interpreters who had transmitted a private enlightenment reserved for the initiated. This was their esoteric tradition which a man like Irenaeus repudiated (iii.2.1) by declaring that "truth cannot be extracted from the Scriptures by those who are ignorant of tradition." He meant the tradition possessed by the apostolic churches. Yet this tradition was still undefined. Neither the Marcionite nor the Montanist movement, of course, made the same appeal to tradition, though both roused ardent loyalty to the Lord. The one was Pauline, the other Johannine, in its interests; but the immediate future thrilled the Montanists, and the past for Marcionites began not with any Hebrew preparation but with the sudden emergence of Jesus and his one apostle. Jesus they knew, and Paul they knew; and, for both, Marcion himself provided any interpretation needful. An episcopal organization belonged to both movements, but it was not based on apostolic tradition as the Catholic system professed to be. Nevertheless, defined or undefined, Catholic, Marcionite, or Montanist, the thrill of tradition was a reality. Those were the days of persecution. Testimony borne to the Lord meant a brave spirit, even if the mind blundered about theology. Who cares whether Perpetua's opinions had a Montanist tinge or not? She belonged to the noble army of the martyrs; and like every army it had a number of divisions, in the sound sense of the phrase. It is her confession of the Lord and her endurance that count.

In these early centuries there was no strict partition between Scripture and tradition, as if revelation, in the

sense of guidance by the Spirit, was confined to the interpretation of the Bible. At its best, in its most representative leaders, the Church was conscious of living and moving in the Spirit, with the Word of God as its norm for truth and belief but also with a continuous, creative power of development in the expression and application of the gospel, as that inspired fresh forms of service—service being taken in the widest range of the term, from worship to duty. Yet even then two tendencies which have repeatedly been felt throughout Christian history were vocal. Some objected to any but scriptural words being used in defining the faith. Athanasius was criticized for employing a word like "homousios," to which he sensibly replied that he was not a slave to any word and that old truth had often to be stated for later generations in phrases which were new in nothing but expression. Others demanded a biblical precedent for each and every practice of the Church in its rites. Where was the scriptural basis for turning to the East in prayer; or for threefold immersion at baptism; or for the change of time for the Lord's supper, from evening to morning? To these good Christians, Tertullian, in *The Soldier's Crown* (iii, iv), replied, "You ask for a scriptural ruling on such regulations? You will not find any. You will have tradition adduced as the source, custom as the sanction, and loyalty as their support." The Church was not biblicist; neither was it under any book of Leviticus. The Carthaginian scholar's statement was slapdash, but it was fundamentally sensible as a repudiation of any artificial, statutory appeal to the Word.

Meantime Christians thrilled to tradition as the living nexus between them and the apostolic testimony. At

the very beginning of his *Stromata*, Clement of Alexandria, for example, recounts gratefully how that testimony had reached him and his contemporaries. "Preserving the true tradition of the blessed teaching derived directly from the holy apostles Peter and James, John and Paul, the son receiving it from the father (though few sons were like their fathers), they [the missionaries] came by God's favor to us as well, in order to deposit these ancestral, apostolic seeds. Well do I know that they will rejoice. For, in my opinion, a soul desirous of preserving the blessed tradition unbroken may be described as follows: 'in a man who loves wisdom his father takes delight.'" Such apostolic traditions were regularly preserved and taught catechetically by means of Scripture to a large degree. But there is no evidence of an inspired Church authority. The bishops supervised the instruction. Yet most Christians were doing what some of them had already done in their Jewish days, not only listening to their sacred book in worship but also reading it at home, studying it with the aid of the apostolic tradition which lived within the fellowship. Scripture was taught, sermons were preached from it, during these early centuries. Advice was freely given to lay folk. But the interpretation was not a special function reserved for the clergy, as if the laity could have access to the Bible only through the priesthood. No restrictions were as yet laid on the private reading of Scripture. On the contrary, it was encouraged. And no one church assumed the right of interpreting the Bible for others. What was afterward called by the technical term of the "*doctrina vivi magisterii ecclesiastici*" did not start till the days of Augustine and Vincent of Lerins.

## IV

It suited later generations, who had little or no historical interest and knowledge, to believe that contemporary beliefs and rites had always been traditional. They innocently accepted this view, so attractively presented by Dryden's lines in the second part of *The Hind and the Panther*:

The good old bishops took a simpler way;  
Each asked but what he heard his father say,  
Or how he was instructed in his youth,  
And by tradition's force upheld the truth.

But—peace to the poet and his neat verse—these good old bishops of the early Church did nothing of the kind. For one thing, most of them argued as well as accepted the faith. Some argued sharply with one another. The best were always ready to give outsiders a "reason of the hope that was in them"; and the reasons had to be fresh, up-to-date, and stamped by experience, even when they echoed earlier truth. For another thing, not only had they to argue but not all upheld the truth. It was convenient for subsequent ages to believe that the good old bishops were without exception orthodox, according to mediaeval standards. Vincent of Lerins could rest his argument on the theory that nothing deserved acceptance as Catholic if it had not the three notes of antiquity, ubiquity, and oecumenicity. Yet, whether he had Augustine's theology in mind or the Nestorians, there had been periods when the orthodox faith had been by no means held by all bishops, not even by the Roman bishop—periods such as that in which, to use Newman's phrase, Christendom looked

out upon a renegade pope, Liberius, and on Athanasius wandering in the desert. Then at least it was the laity rather than the episcopate which upheld Catholic truth; "there was a temporary suspension of the ecclesia docens." <sup>23</sup>

It is true that Vincent is interested in tradition as confirming the Word, which is the supreme standard. On this point he is in line with earlier bishops. Yet, when confessions of faith and creeds began to rise in power, the significance of the Word was in danger of being affected. How readily this might take place is obvious when the policy of a wise bishop like Cyril of Jerusalem is understood. About 348 A.D. he gave a series of admirable catechetical instructions to his church, justifying the baptismal creed, once the Apostles' Creed, as a simple expression of the faith to be found in the gospels (iv.35, v.12), even though he did not believe that the apostles had written it. He told his people to read the twenty-two books of the Bible and have nothing to do with apocryphal writings; but, as "not all can read the Scripture, some because they lack education, others for lack of leisure," let them learn to recite the creed. Only, he explains, "expect to find every article of the creed proved by Holy Scripture"; that creed is "like a tiny grain of mustard seed, holding all the divine contents of knowledge in the Old and in the New Testament." The drawback was that soon people found Scripture too difficult. It was easier to read the creeds, taking the Bible as a source of "loci salutare" (saving texts). The laity began to drop Bible reading in private. Scripture's main function now was assumed to be that of a source for decisive corroborations of articles in the creed. Once it had been possible for



Irenaeus to assume that "the entire Scripture may be understood by all fully and unambiguously and harmoniously," instead of requiring such forced explanations of the parables as esoteric gnostics offered. But now the sacramental use of Scripture for the ordinary churchman was disappearing. Not that the people lacked the preaching of the Word. They knew the gospel story by hearing parts of it in worship, and by means of the religious drama. Still there was a loss. Even in the monasteries, where training went on, the study of Scripture came to be a rapid, preliminary discipline for the serious study of the Lombard's *Sentences*, on which commentaries were written and from which the clergy derived their knowledge of dogma directly. The Word fell out of focus in the Christian synthesis, and tradition encroached on its functions.

"Interpretation is of the present as well as of the past. We can believe that there is a divine voice, but we find it hard to believe that it has died away to an echo from the Judaeian hills." <sup>24</sup> No one was tempted to believe this so long as the Spirit was still believed to be working through the written Word of Scripture within the fellowship of the faith. In an age which hardly as yet possessed any historical sense, even the allegorical method of interpretation, for all its drawbacks, was an effort to preserve this belief; and in later ages, when Christianity tended to become an ecclesiastical philosophy which based its appeal mainly upon dogmatic statements and moral regulations, the mystical interpretation of the Bible did similar service. Again, there were revivals of living tradition. One took place when the Crusades made Europe sensible of the realism of Jesus, as the scenes of the Holy Land

were visited. Even the superstitious adoration of relics, which accompanied this devotion, was, at any rate, a recoil from abstractions. The thrill of tradition came through unpromising media. Besides, no one who knows the devotional writings of great schoolmen like Anselm and Aquinas would hesitate to allow that their interest in the inwardness of the Bible was far from being formal. Yet in the practical working out of dogma, the Word did become for many Christians very much what the Sacred Book during the same period became for adherents of the Jewish Torah. For between the tenth and the fifteenth century, with the influx of Jews into Arabic Spain, a similar phase of thought is to be noted among the leaders of Jewish scholasticism, who, more or less influenced by the Mutazilite ideas within Islam, classified and subdivided the commandments of their faith. Thus, under the Geonim, or presidents of the Babylonian academies, who from the sixth to the eleventh century dominated the interpretation of the Torah and the Talmud, the learned Saadia held that tradition was to present-day believers what revelation had been to the prophets, and consequently proposed a triple source for the Law in reason, revelation, and tradition. In the twelfth century this began to be challenged by two experts, Maimonides and Halevi. The latter stressed tradition over reason, since only thus could ceremonial precepts and regulations be ranked equal in authority to the moral statutes of the Torah. Naturally a Karaite thinker like Aaron ben Elijah in the fourteenth century passed by tradition; for him the ultimate secret source of authoritative belief and practice rested in the divine reason and in Scripture or revelation, nowhere else. Since the decisive issue in debate generally turned upon the

problem of the ritual or ceremonial laws, Maimonides, who endeavored to combine a thorough belief in the Torah with a broad, philosophical outlook, was obliged at this point to fall back, like Philo of old, on the figurative or allegorical interpretation of the Law; symbolism allowed one to avoid the awkwardness of handling literally some antiquated sections of the sacrificial code. But this line proved too liberal for many of his coreligionists. Halevi's method was more popular. He treated such ceremonial items as the dietary laws by demanding a faith that asked no questions. Tradition had authenticated these regulations; obedience was due to them, no matter how arbitrary or unintelligible they might seem to be. Indeed, according to Halevi's apologetic, they were in a real sense more significant than ethical precepts of the Law about justice, mercy, and humility; for, while the latter might apply to all nations and be recognized by any religion, what made Judaism distinctive was precisely these quaint, forbidding precepts with their archaic flavor.

The nearest Christian parallel might seem to be the canon law of the Western Church, the vast complex of regulations which was slowly being compiled. But, though tradition entered into its arrangement, the Church had no difference of opinion about its place. The sources of canon law were, in order, Scripture, decisions of councils, episcopal pronouncements, and traditions of the Church. On the surface this appears to exalt Scripture. But it was a formal acknowledgment, no more than that. And the disappointing feature of the vogue won by tradition in the compiling of dogma was that it tended to reduce Scripture to much the same level. Oral tradition possessed richer content than the Word. It enabled Church authori-

ties not simply to revise but to reverse what the Bible laid down, if the interests of the Church demanded this. Nothing is more curious than the vagaries into which oral tradition led some of its defenders. One was the result of their recourse to excursions of the historical imagination, in order to discover when such and such a tradition arose. The pity was that these had more imagination than history. Thus, when apologists had to explain the patent differences of opinion in the early Church, even a writer like Perrone was driven to reply that the apostles did not impart all the unwritten revelations to all bishops or churches; they merely transmitted tradition as occasion offered. Hence the conflict over the scope of the canon and over the sweep of tradition itself, before the Church could finally make up its mind—which implies a somewhat casual transmission on the part of the apostles. Cardinal Fisher, Luther's English opponent, was perplexed to account for the fact that belief in purgatory and indulgences was barely mentioned by the early fathers; that it was not accepted by the Greek Church; and that even his own communion grasped the blessed truth gradually, in part from Scripture and in part from revelation. However, he reflected, the primitive Church did not need it. "For them love then so burned that everyone was ready to meet death for Christ"! Newman himself echoes this plea more than once, apparently without any uneasiness. As his own dominating interest in development was to establish the prerogatives of the Virgin and the cult of saints and angels by deducing these ideas from the Nicene affirmation of Christ's divinity, this logical method naturally had no particular interest in history.

The use of oral tradition to explain awkward incon-

sistencies or gaps in the written Word also led to the ingenious paradox that what St. Paul did not write turns out to be more important than what he did write. Thus he taught the Thessalonians to hold fast what they had been "taught, whether by word or our epistle." Now, as the worship of images and the full sacramental doctrine of Latin Christendom are not in the "epistle," they must have been in the unwritten "word," awaiting their later enactment by the Church. So Aquinas himself gravely concludes, adding that the veneration of Christ's image is supported by the tradition that "the blessed Luke painted the likeness of Christ which is preserved in Rome" (*S. T.* 3.q.25. 3 a. 4). Though all human arrangements and rites in the sacraments are not handed down by the Scripture, he observes elsewhere (*S. T.* 3.q.64. a.2), "yet the Church holds" what is essential to the sacraments "from the intimate tradition of the apostles." For did not the blessed apostle conclude his instruction on the eucharist by adding, "The rest I will set in order when I come"? Even if these words referred to what precedes instead of being a general promise to deal with other troubles than those raised by the Lord's supper at Corinth, the inference extracted from them is naïve. It is true that Aquinas had predecessors here. According to Augustine himself, in his fifty-fourth epistle, these words of the apostle meant that, when he returned to Corinth, he completed his directions for the eucharist by making a preliminary fast essential. It was one of Augustine's less happy contributions to the study of the apostle's mind.

All such methods, however, are no more than a proof now even the strong mind of Aquinas was unconsciously limited at this point by his practical identification of tra-

dition with the contemporary position of the Church. To one who believed that the Apostles' Creed had been written by the apostles themselves, it was natural to assume that scriptural testimony must be an anticipation of credal theology. Lack of exegetical insight and of any historical<sup>25</sup> interest in dogma made it all the more easy for him to presuppose such a continuity, until, as one sympathetic critic notes, "his acutely analytic mind was thrown off its guard"; Scripture resolved itself "into a resonant echo of anything that a man's heart uttered, whether originally derived from Scripture or no."<sup>26</sup> In a way, this method proved as irrelevant and irresponsible as a mystical interpretation of the text of the Bible. When these things could happen in the green tree of a genius, what might be expected in the dry? The subsequent utterances of Latin theologians on exegesis and oral tradition are often a melancholy answer.

## CHAPTER IV

### The "New Trent Religion"

SIR JOHN EVELYN was as regular in attending church as his fellow diarist at the Admiralty, though with more devotional interest than Pepys ever showed. In his diary for March 10, 1687, he tells how Dr. Ken, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, preached to a crowded, influential congregation at Whitehall, dilating on "the blasphemies, perfidy, wresting of scripture, preference of tradition before it, spirit of persecution, superstition, legends and fables of the scribes and Pharisees, so that all the auditory understood his meaning of a parallel between them and the Romish priests and their new Trent religion. He exhorted his audience to adhere to the written Word, and to persevere in the faith taught in the Church of England, whose doctrine for catholic soundness he preferred to all the communities and churches of Christians in the world; concluding with a kind of prophecy that whatever it suffered, it should after a short trial emerge to the confusion of her adversaries and the glory of God." The prediction soon began to come true. But it required some courage to make it at a moment when King James the Second had forbidden controversial sermons. A wave of Jesuit propaganda, openly favored by the Court, was breaking over England. In private circles as well as at the universities and in the services, proselytism was active. This propa-

ganda of the counter-reformation was ably carried on in the wake of the revolutionary pronouncements made by the Council of Trent, especially of one upon tradition and the Bible. Till the close of the nineteenth century tradition was to be a stirring theme, as it never yet had been. Once again indeed "the noise of archers in the places of drawing water" was heard among men. Controversy did not interrupt the soul's access to the water of life. The inward movements of worship went on, thanks to the perennial thrill of tradition which lay beyond the reach of sharp debate. But when cross-questioning on almost any phase of ecclesiastical authority starts, tradition in the larger sense of the term at once becomes an exciting topic. Most questions that were to be asked and variously answered, whether the issue was apostolic succession or inspiration or church polity, now proved to have a way of raising the previous question, "What does tradition mean in this connection?" And it all started from what took place one April afternoon in 1546 at a church in the Austrian Tyrol.

## I

In the least poetical of his sonnets, a bitter attack on the Westminster Assembly of Divines, where the Presbyterians had outvoted the Independents, Milton could find nothing more scathing to say of his opponents than that "your tricks, your plots and packings are worse than those of Trent." But the members at Trent were all free to speak, and they spoke at length. If the curia saw to it that the majority would vote as desired, this was but natural in the circumstances. If witty Italians remarked that the Holy Ghost reached Trent in carpetbags from Rome,



they were merely repeating a common jest about papal elections. The Council had been reluctantly convened at the end of 1545, to satisfy the demand for Church reform. It was a small, unrepresentative group who gathered at Trent, purely clerical. The voting members at first were three or four dozen bishops from Italy, mainly supporters of the Roman curia, with about half a dozen generals of the monastic orders. There were no representatives from Germany, only two Frenchmen, five Spaniards, and a couple of Englishmen: Robert Wauchop, the Archbishop of Armagh, and Henry Pates, the last Roman bishop of Worcester. The three cardinal legates then in charge of the proceedings<sup>27</sup> were skilled diplomatists: Cervini, Del Monte, and Reginald Pole.

One of the first things the legates had to do was to induce the members to abandon their plan of styling the Council as "representing the Church universal," since this might involve the superiority of the Council over the Pope himself. "To be quite candid," said Musso, a flamboyant bishop, "in matters that affect the mysteries of the faith, I would sooner believe a single supreme pontiff than a thousand Augustines, Jeromes, and Gregories." This cheered the legates. It voiced the policy of the curia, which was to restore the papal authority in Europe, after the disturbing influence of the reforming councils in the fifteenth century. The need of the hour was to regain the control once exercised so nobly by Pope Innocent the Third at the fourth Lateran Council of 1215, when he had not only contributed materially to canon law but proclaimed the papal primacy and defined for the Western Church its eucharistic doctrine of transubstantiation.

The question of tradition came up almost casually. As the delegates waited for instructions from headquarters, they discussed methods of procedure. At last, to keep them busy, they were allowed to handle reform and doctrine simultaneously, the legates having been privately told to act prudently, as reform was a secondary affair. One objective of the Council was to show a solid front against the Augsburg pronouncement of the Lutheran rebels that Scripture was the sole source of belief. This manifesto took final shape in April, 1546, when the majority decided to pronounce an anathema on anyone who refused to "receive and revere with an equal [pari] affection of piety and reverence" not only all the books (that is, the written Scriptures in the authentic Vulgate version, including the Apocrypha of the Old Testament), but also "the unwritten traditions relating alike to faith and morals which were dictated either orally by Christ or by the Holy Spirit, and which have been preserved in unbroken succession within the Catholic Church." The Church was thereby pronounced to be not merely the custodian but the interpreter of the Bible and tradition as the twin sources of true dogma. Thus and only thus could be preserved the purity of "the gospel which at first Christ preached personally and then ordered to be preached by His apostles," it being "contained in the written scriptures and in unwritten traditions."

The Council was not prepared to follow Augustine implicitly on the dogmatic interpretation of the gospel, but it agreed to his ruling on the Old Testament canon, though Augustine would not have called the Vulgate authentic. This was not because of a desire to fill up the long gap between Daniel and the New Testament, but

because some of the deuterocanonical books had become specially important for certain beliefs and rites of the Latin Church. It was natural to agree that the living faith could not have failed to produce literature during the period between the Testaments. It was more telling to defend the inclusion of these books for the sake of their primary usefulness to ecclesiastical traditions, particularly as Luther had merely acknowledged their relative importance.

This dual pronouncement was the outcome of a prolonged and sharp discussion, in which the first "scene" of the Council occurred.<sup>28</sup> One or two Dominicans led the opposition to such an unheard-of proposal. Bertano, the bishop of Fani, challenged "pari" outright. Traditions were liable to change and, although the Spirit might be said to inspire both Scriptures and traditions, there were degrees of inspiration; it was wrong to place both on the same level. Some members proposed "similar" instead of "equal." Others suggested a phrase like "due reverence." It was pointed out that the Church could not be held to the tradition of "things strangled" in the first Jerusalem Council, although that tradition had the sanction of the Holy Spirit; indeed bishop Nachianti of Chioggia carried several members with him when he first declared that all things needful to salvation were already in Scripture, whereas tradition embraced a number of regulations about facts and ceremonies which were for the most part futile and a burden to Christian people. "Piety and reverence?" the Dominican cried, pointing to this and that implication of the decree on the canon and tradition; "much of it seems to me impious." This outburst caused anguish and indignation in the majority. The daring

bishop was censured and forced to apologize, explaining that he had not meant to call his fellow members irreverent. When the vote was taken, he was deserted by nearly all who had agreed with him. "Obediam," muttered Nachianti. He would say neither "Placet" nor "Non placet." There was open uneasiness even in some Italian circles about the wisdom of "pari," but nearly all the doubtful members swung into line behind the three legates. Behind the scenes it is plain that much went on which is only to be inferred from the reported debates. Ambiguities of language about tradition are mixed up with a steady disinclination to define tradition. This was only natural, as the managers knew one of the further duties of the Council was to fix the number and import of the sacraments. It was important to avoid using too defined terms at this point. The really vital need was to prevent the Word from being of more weight than tradition; and the Tridentine formula was drawn up to secure this, as it had never been openly stated before. The result was that it never became quite clear whether traditions were doctrines not contained in Scriptures or expansions of what Scripture somehow contained. However, the formula, for all its staggering innovations, was a weapon for attack and for defense which could be easily wielded.

## II

While the Council modified a number of abuses in the Episcopate and priesthood, and corrected some features of the breviary, for example, the urgent issue of indulgences was taken up only in a hurry, in the twenty-fifth session, and never really faced. Antipapal churchmen in Spain and Italy, seriously concerned about reform, found

their modest proposals blocked and blunted for the most part, despite the revelations made by the papal commission of 1537. Still, the marvel is that so much was accomplished by a Council which was in suspended animation for eighteen years in all, during the course of which it moved from Trent to Bologna and back again, with interludes of action lasting for only twenty-one months. The attendance increased, especially when some trained Jesuits were brought from Spain to handle the awkward dogmatic problems. Eventually over two hundred and fifty prelates signed the official Acts, which made the gathering more like Titian's idealized painting in the Louvre. Altogether the existence of the Council was a notable achievement. It was no wonder that Cervini and Del Monte were promoted to the papal Chair. They richly deserved their reward.<sup>29</sup> Thanks to them and their successors, the Council, for all its unpromising start and repeated handicaps, equipped the Latin Church for active war on heresy, particularly at the end by providing a new Index of prohibited books and by giving full scope to the Inquisition. The Index was felt to be specially necessary in view of the widespread appeal made by the New Learning and the Reformation to the public through printing. Luther and others had popularized their views by means of tracts and pamphlets. The humanists had caught the ear of the masses as well as of the cultured. Church decrees must therefore be followed up by some practical control of the press and public opinion.

When it came to a question of enforcing the Tridentine decrees, only one country was able and willing. In France and Germany, for various reasons, more political than religious, there was a reluctance, shared by smaller states

like Portugal and Poland, to undertake the thoroughgoing action required by the Vatican policy. Still Spain, with the Jesuits rising to new authority, was ready. Her richest gift to Christendom was really to be in mystical literature. But for over a rough century it looked as though the spirit of freedom would be thrown back in Europe by her armies and fleets no less than by her dogmas and the Inquisition. What a German historian calls the "brutal Hispanierung" of more than Italy began. A sterner sentence was passed upon it all by a great historian who belonged to the Roman Church. "The Council of Trent impressed on the Church the stamp of an intolerant age, and perpetuated by its decrees the spirit of an austere immorality."<sup>30</sup> This sounds like a paradox, but what Lord Acton meant was that, while the Trent system was "austere in the sense that it condemned sexual vice and enjoined self-denial," it was "immoral in that it enjoined persecution and the suppression of inconvenient truth" by means of the Inquisition and the Index in particular. How it ended for Spain and for Europe, the world knows.

### III

There was more than an encounter between explosive force and reactionary defense. Behind the Tridentine diplomacy many laymen as well as priests were vaguely but seriously convinced that mischief was afoot, and that the reformers represented subversive tendencies which threatened the faith and morals of Christendom. They held this as resolutely as Luther and his allies held that the existing order of the Latin Church had become a menace to the said faith and morals. The point is that both parties were almost unexpectedly moved to work out new forma-

tions, however convulsive were some of the initial phases of the conflict; and they were formations that radiated with positive affirmations about what was implied by "tradition."

When sharp attacks on the Tridentine restatement of mediaeval Catholicism called for a reply, this was furnished by Cardinal Bellarmine in his elaborate dissertation *De Controversiis Christianae Fidei, adversus huius temporis haereticos*. He had not the historical grasp of his fellow Jesuit, Petavius, but his work won wider attention. Bellarmine was the first to draw some attention to the function of tradition in pre-Christian civilization such as Greece displayed, and to what is now known as comparative religion. But in his biblical knowledge he was no match either for reformers like Chemnitz or for the supporters of the new learning in his own Church. Thus he naïvely rejoices that, together with "the usage of the Church, which ought to have great weight among Catholics as an argument," the Council had for the first time proved the book of Susanna and the additions to Daniel to be truly canonical. He ranks Erasmus among the semi-Christians of these latter days for having dared to agree with some Christian scholars from the third century onward that the book of Susanna was historically dubious. Could any writing be regarded as pious fiction which was read once a year in Lent? Perish the thought! Learning must not prevail against tradition (i.9). When it was at once pointed out (by Martin Chemnitz, I think) that the Vulgate text of John xiv.26 was wrong, the thrust was easily parried by the Cardinal. Even supposing Jesus had promised that the Spirit would bring to the remembrance of the disciples "whatsoever I have said to you,"

not "whatsoever I may [or will] say to you," this is of no moment, upholders of oral tradition argued. Aorist or future, it is immaterial which reading is preferred. The Fourth gospel is not a complete statement of the Lord's mind. None of the gospels is, not even all four of them together. It is pathetic to find Bellarmine (iv.5) even bringing forward the last words of St. John's gospel as a proof that the apostles were well aware that their written records were inadequate. "There are many other things which Jesus did" refers to what the Lord spoke to the apostles after the passion about "the things pertaining to the kingdom," when he was "seen of them forty days"; that is, to precious communications which were too profound to be committed to writing. Bellarmine forgot the fathers of the Church. Augustine and Cyril of Alexandria, in their homilies on St. John's gospel, expressly pause at the end of the twentieth chapter to apply the words to their readers. "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." "While much is left unrecorded," says Augustine (*Tract. in Joh.* xlix.1), "such words and deeds of the Lord Jesus were chosen for record, which seemed to suffice for the salvation of believers." "Those alone are recorded in this book," so Cyril observes (*Liber in Johann.* xii), "which should be amply sufficient to make the hearers believers." The truth is that Bellarmine was committed to a theory of tradition which made it impossible for him to use the technique of learning which members of his own Church were already employing with a vitalizing effect on the



study of the Bible. His exegetical methods were as antiquated as the mediaeval crossbow in European warfare.

It was only recently that the great Jesuit was promoted to the rank of celestial "doctor" in the Church, an honor he justly deserved. Cotton Mather called him "the last Goliath of the Philistines." But this was premature. Bellarmine had many a successor, none more influential than Bossuet in the following century, whose prose works, notably the *Exposition de la doctrine catholique*, had a vogue in the world of culture, where it commended the Tridentine idea of tradition to thousands whom theologians like Bellarmine failed to affect. Bossuet's pages, like those of De Maistre and Chateaubriand, belong to French literature. They gave people the same sort of impression that Macaulay's essays often do. The style is so clear, the facts so well selected, the tone so calmly confident, that the unwary reader reflects, "Surely this must be the last word on the subject." It is only later that one discovers he has been reading a barrister's plea for the prosecution or the defense, not the judge's summing up, when he has been following Bossuet on the patent defects of Protestant faith as compared with the reasonableness of tradition, or Macaulay on Warren Hastings, Bacon, and the Earl of Chatham. Outsiders who watched the religious conflict must have cynically compared it sometimes to a choice between Proteus and Procrustes. In stiff and provocative moods, of which there were too many during this period, it was the interest of one side to represent the other either as a rigid system of tradition or as a floating jellyfish. The swarming differences of opinion in reformed circles, where the Bible apparently meant this to Socinians, that to Calvinists, and something else to anyone else, gave Bos-

suet a chance of which he availed himself to the full. None of his critics, within or outside his own communion, won the ear of the public as he did.

He enjoyed a temporary triumph. But not without some setbacks. The inclusion of the apocryphal books in the Old Testament canon was one of the Trent decisions which roused the special indignation of Leibnitz during the course of his friendly and prolonged debate with Bossuet.<sup>81</sup> In a letter of April 30, 1700, followed up by trenchant communications on May fourteenth and twenty-fourth, the philosopher frankly told the Bishop of Meaux that this decree was a spiteful error, due to controversial purposes. What was it but "a modern innovation made by your party," which shocked all who knew that Jerome's contrary judgment had been widely held by the early and later Church. He insisted that this objectionable anathema was one of those which would require to be withdrawn if Christians were to entertain any idea of rejoining the Roman communion. Poor Bossuet, a tired old man, worried already by ultramontanes in France, was driven to reply that the Trent decisions were binding; no concessions or modifications were permissible on "points of defined doctrine, especially such as had been defined by the council." Over a century later, in *Du Pape* (i.14), Joseph de Maistre hailed this ruling of Bossuet as "justement inflexible." So it was, in a sense—a sort of Maginot line hurriedly thrown up for defense, and still able to upset negotiations for a promising project of reunion. Leibnitz knew too much about tradition and the sacraments for his opponent. In exploring the ground for a common understanding, however, he found himself face to face with the prior assumption of the ecclesiastic that the Trent

council was oecumenical and authoritative; what the blessed word "pari" covered, no historical argument availed to reopen. Fain would Bossuet have had the glory of bringing so distinguished a convert over to the Roman obedience. But in vain was the net spread in the sight of this particular bird.

Tradition was prized by Bossuet for more than controversial ends. It entered into the beating heart of his devotions. In his *Méditations sur l'Evangile* (55th journée) on "La Cène," he explains to the congregation why the mass is not exactly the same as it was in the New Testament. This had been already done by Thomas Aquinas, but the ruling of the Tridentine council enabled Bossuet to enforce the argument. Originally indeed the normal practice for communion, not only in public worship but even in the case of the sacrament being reserved for absent or sick members, was the reception of both bread and wine. In the fifth century Pope Gelasius explicitly forbade any alteration such as some in his day, "fettered by some superstition," were introducing when they abstained from the cup. This ruling was reiterated by Pope Paschal the Second in the twelfth century, for by that time some Latin theologians were again arguing that the bread alone sufficed. "Drink ye all of the cup" might be scriptural, but it was not obligatory. Though the Trent council used guarded language, it claimed the right of the Church in virtue of her tradition to alter what appeared to be the New Testament practice. Bossuet echoed this claim. Instead of considering, with the rest of Christendom, as Father F. W. Puller pleads, that "the only safe course for the Church is to adhere strictly to what our Lord has taught us about it by His words and actions," whatever

be the theological interests of later tradition, the French preacher called on the congregation to marvel at "the great power given by Jesus Christ to His Church in the dispensation of His mysteries. The Church knows the secret of Jesus Christ. He has allowed the Church to separate what He put together. Never be surprised at what the Church of God does. Instructed by the Holy Spirit and by the tradition of all ages, she knows what Jesus Christ meant"; that is, not simply in altering the time of the eucharist from evening to morning, and in making fasting before the sacrament obligatory, but by confining the laity to communion in one kind.

For those outside the Roman province of Catholicism, it would be as indecorous as it is superfluous to enter into further discussion of the interests and assumptions about tradition which this type of devotion presupposes. But, in all fairness, the skilful men who were responsible for the Tridentine ruling on tradition should not be deprived of their due honor, as they are in the most recent edition<sup>82</sup> of the *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, where the editor, Father H. J. Schroeder, for some reason omits "pari" from the English version. In the Latin text it is retained; but the unwary Latinless reader is led to believe that the council received and venerated both Scripture and traditions "with a feeling of piety and reverence," which was the very thing that the council declined to do. "Pari" may have proved rather embarrassing, but at the time it was reckoned essential to orthodoxy. The Tridentine majority fought for it as they never would have fought for such a commonplace as "a feeling of piety and reverence." To leave "pari" out would not have been of the least con-

troversial use against the reformed doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. Father Schroeder's translation does no sort of justice to the managers of the Trent synod. These competent diplomatists took immense pains to secure a majority vote in favor of the equation of tradition and Scripture. Nothing short of this would have served their purpose. They were fishing in troubled waters, and they did not propose to cast their line in vain. "Pari" was the barb on the hook.

## IV

It has pleased God to inspire certain books about Christ and His apostles, for the purpose of conveying the pure gospel to mankind as the sequel and fulfillment of revelation in the scriptures of the Old Testament. But these New Testament writings were never meant to be complete; they were only part of the new revelation, which contained rich stores of divine truth forming another source and standard of equal age and importance. These instructions or regulations taught by the Lord and His apostles, though never written down, were from the first preserved in the living memory of the Church and providentially employed to supplement or develop many implicit but hitherto hardly suspected beliefs and practices of the original gospel, as the needs of the faithful required. From time to time such oral traditions of dogma and usage were more fully defined for the richer profit of the faith or the defense of the truth against heresy. Originally this was done through oecumenical councils, for the most part, but finally by the Latin Pope, acting more or less independently of councils, as the Head of the Church, the lineal, unerring successor of St. Peter in the supreme

see of Rome. Since these decisions upon what is essential to salvation are merely the unfolding of what belonged to the original heritage of the living Church, it is the prerogative of that Church, guided as ever by the Spirit, to determine the relative bearing of written Scripture and unwritten tradition upon any issue of belief that may emerge. Such in outline was the hypothesis of tradition held by the Latin Church of the West, as it was finally shaped between the Council of Trent and the Vatican Council three centuries later.

The leaders of the Reformation had a large answer to what this implied for the Word and the Spirit. Any attempt to offer proof of revelation is based on the presupposition that something is assumed somehow to be self-evident. What Luther and Calvin<sup>88</sup> sought to show was, to a certain extent, exactly what the Roman mediæval theory assumed; namely, that argument about the content of Scripture led to no real assurance of the truth. Confidence must be derived from a higher source than human interpretations and conjectures. The Tridentine restatement held that Scripture must not be separated from tradition, and that the Church alone possessed the clue to what both attested. In other words, the authority of the Church was self-evident. Luther and Calvin sought to restore and revise what they believed to be the original function of Scripture as the classical source of apostolic teaching, instead of serving as a textbook for theology. To them it was self-evident that the Bible approved itself still to Christians, as it had done from the first, by the secret testimony of the Spirit answering to the deep needs of the human soul. Truth in Scripture awakened its own response and recognition as the Spirit who had inspired it

originally for the fellowship continued to apply it to the consciousness and conscience of the faithful, confirming it for them by means of the sacraments and illuminating their minds to receive truths of the gospel which otherwise would have remained external and unimpressive. The reformers maintained that no ipse dixit of tradition could avail to do this for believing men; nothing could, except the living tradition of the Church as it used the Bible sacramentally.

The very differences of two such thinkers are illuminating in the light of what they hold in common; namely, that the function of the Word is to impart as well as to express, to communicate as well as to disclose. The preaching and teaching of the Word, no less than the reading of it, therefore makes Scripture a medium for the saving truth of God. And this amounts to a real "paradosis" or tradition in its original sense. The hearer is brought within reach of the reality behind the Word, as the Spirit present in the Church and in the Word acts upon personal faith. To this position, never quite lost sight of in mediaeval Catholicism, all that could be objected was the twofold assertion, afterward made at length by Cardinal Franzelin, that such an alleged gift of God to readers of the Word ruled out any function of the trained clergy and doctors, and that it bred individualism as well as breaches of unity—unity for him meaning obedient assent to dogmatic formulas. The inward witness of the Spirit<sup>84</sup> thus became subordinated to the interests of the hierarchy. Tradition of a formal character superseded the Word as the medium of faith.

The narrower attitude toward the older view of Scripture, adopted at Trent, is best understood by way of

contrast between it and one of the first Roman authorities. Augustine once wrote to Jerome, in his eighty-second epistle, "When I accept the testimony of any other author, however devout and learned," outside the inspired writers of Scripture, "it is only because they have been able to convince me, either by means of the canonical writers themselves or by appealing to my own reason, that it agrees with truth. And I believe your opinion is the same as mine." In mediaeval scholasticism this principle had never been entirely forgotten. Cardinal Cajetan had appealed to it, in the preface to his commentary on the Pentateuch, in order to justify the right of studying Scripture apart from the scholastic tradition. As recently as 1532 he had insisted that Jerome's exclusion of the Old Testament Apocrypha from the authentic canon was a ruling for the Church: "The books he differentiated from the canonical books, we regard as outside the canon." This was in the preface to his commentary on Hebrews, an epistle which, by the way, he hesitated to ascribe to the apostle Paul. Cajetan was no friend of Luther, but neither was he an eccentric. His attitude to the canon and to Bible study represented a conception, however, which made "the new Trent religion" an intelligible title for what was a retrograde movement. The fresh air of Cajetan's standpoint was lost inside the decree upon the Word and tradition.

A second limitation of the Tridentine policy was that it ignored the Greek Church with its liturgies of the Resurrection, where the thrill of worship is not less impressive than in the rites of the Roman Mass. The Greek tradition, however, by its refusal to incorporate Latin innovations like purgatory and transubstantiation, was



preserved from the Western abuses of the penitential system as well as from what Heiler sternly calls "the cancer in the Roman system";<sup>85</sup> that is, the purchased private masses. In a chapter (on "The Transfiguration of the World and of Life in the Eucharist") of *Mysticism of the Eastern Church*, Professor Nicholas Arseniew gives a glowing account, showing how the Greek Church retains the authentic thrill of the eucharist, which is "the vital nerve of the Church's life," by stressing the close tie of brotherhood in real communion. To all this as well as to the "presence of the Spirit and the deep movements of grace" within the Eastern Church, Newman did no sort of justice, as one of his closest critics<sup>86</sup> pointed out. But the provincialism was earlier than Newman. It marked the Trent policy, which took Lutherans to be rebels or heretics, and Greeks to be schismatics. Now the successive conflicts between East and West, from the eighth century onward, which culminated in the bisection of Catholicism, had not affected the general Greek view of tradition, which up to a certain point ran parallel with that of Rome, though at the futile Union Council of Florence no agreement could be reached on the exact content of tradition. Trent by its novel, narrow interpretation drove a wedge between the two communions. No patriarch of the Greek Church could in any case have shared the longing of Browning's bishop to

Hear the blessed murmur of the mass,  
And see God made and eaten all day long,  
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste  
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke.

His reverent worship was on other lines, not less traditional. Indeed it might be said that, for the Eastern branch

of Catholicism, the most characteristic verse would be found in John xvii.3: "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Such faith, the Greeks would at once explain, is not merely assent to dogma; it is held by personal life responding to the truth of God. Knowledge is emphasized, but the quality of knowledge is determined by its object. "What constitutes our knowledge of God," a modern scientist remarks, is "the perception that in us as conscious personalities a Reality manifests itself which entirely transcends our individual personalities."<sup>87</sup> That sentence represents the core of the Greek Church's creed. Only, a member of that communion would hasten to say that this Reality is the reality of the living God, and that the perception of the divine life is possible only through life, life worshiping, serving, and sensitive to the real Presence of the risen Lord, especially in the common observance of the eucharist. It is a one-sided conception of tradition which excludes so authentic a form as this.

## v

England and more than England was indebted to King James the First for promoting a revised version of the Bible. But it owed a further debt to him which is less generally known. James was not one-sided. He realized that his clergy required more than Bible study if the religious situation was to be properly handled. So, in issuing royal injunctions to the divinity students of Oxford and Cambridge, he bade them "apply themselves in the first place to the reading of the scriptures, next the councils and the early fathers, and the schoolmen, that thereby they may be better enabled only to preach Christ crucified,

which ought to be the end of their studies." They were "excited to bestow time on the fathers and councils" as well as on the Bible. This injunction was far from welcome to some Puritan authorities, especially at Oxford, with whom Laud, the royal chaplain, had been already at feud during his academic career. These heads of houses saw Laud's hand behind the King's program, with its implication that Scripture alone did not suffice to settle every point of doctrine and discipline in the Church. Others, not without reason, interpreted the royal project as a warning against political sermons. Preaching in those days was often a thinly disguised branch of politics. The pulpit was still an organ of public opinion. Indeed in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, when stress was laid by certain individuals on the apostle's sentence, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," there was sometimes a strong suspicion, as there has often been since, that this was not due primarily to evangelical ardor but to the dislike of the authorities for preaching on social or political issues of the gospel. Monarchs from Constantine downward or upward have had the sincerity as well as the wisdom of their church policies rudely questioned, and King James did not escape unfavorable comment on his university proposals. But he had a statesman's outlook. He understood the position of the Church at the moment better than his Calvinistic critics at Oxford. He saw that the counter-reformation in England could not be checked by merely denouncing or refuting the Tridentine decrees of tradition; something more positive had to be constructed, and this required broader training than a biblical curriculum provided. Francis Bacon, like Hooker before him,

had voiced the views of many educated Englishmen in his protest against narrow interpretations of the Bible which not only excluded attention to Church history but resorted "to conceited [fanciful] inferences and forced allusions, such as do bring ruin to all certainty of religion." The royal injunctions sought to safeguard apologetic from such provincial and unhistorical views of Scripture and the Church. Whatever may have been the chief reason for their promulgation, the result was timely and effective. At no time was the function of true tradition more discussed in England. The subject thrilled popular audiences as well as academic circles. Sermons were preached on it by leading men of the day. Book after book was written, dealing more or less directly with the Tridentine definition, by authors of such varied views as Chillingworth, Cosin, Stillingfleet, Jeremy Taylor, Thorndike, Ussher and Wake—to name only a few of the most influential. Debates were held in public between Jesuits and trained churchmen. Public opinion was formed and informed, till the controversy became, as good controversy should become, educative. Unluckily the tension of the internal situation narrowed the issue unduly to one of ecclesiastical polity at several points, as was the case in the later Tractarian period. But episcopacy was not the ultimate issue. The need and the rights of living tradition within a church which honored the Word of God were vindicated against the claims of continental papalism, and vindicated along lines which were capable of further adjustment and extension.

## VI

Meantime young Newman in 1833 closed his book on *The Arians of the Fourth Century* by assuring his fellow Tractarians that papalism, like Arianism, was a sad, but transient phase. "Even the papal apostasy has lasted but the same proportion of the whole duration of Christianity which Arianism occupied in its day; that is, if we date it, as in fairness we ought, from the fatal council of Trent." He read the signs of the times with little insight. Papalism was not to be a passing cloud. The Trent council had handed over its decrees to the Pope for confirmation, and this impetus had been growing stronger. It was all very well for the Englishman to bewail "the tyrannical enforcement of the Tridentine articles on the part of Rome"; but in less than forty years "the absolute need of a monarchical power in the Church,"<sup>88</sup> for which once he had felt antecedent probabilities, was realized at the Vatican Council. Newman was among the minority who had to suffer anguish at the way in which this was brought about. Yet, as he might have foreseen, the Vatican decree of papal infallibility was but the climax to what the Trent decrees had started. Again, there was some slight opposition. Cardinal Guidi, the Dominican Archbishop of Bologna, created a sensation by a powerful argument that no Pope must issue a dogmatic definition apart from "the counsel of the bishops manifesting the tradition of the churches"; the consent of the collective episcopate was needful to secure any *ex cathedra* statement on faith and morals. When the nettled pontiff summoned him to a private interview, Guidi was amazed to hear him insist, "La tradizione son' io."<sup>89</sup> What are bishops? I myself

am tradition. It was a summary way of stating the papal equivalent of "L'état, c'est moi." There was to be henceforth a priest-king after a new order on the banks of the Tiber; his advent meant that tradition, as it had been known to the Catholic Church, ceased to be, so far as Rome was concerned.

There is often milk and meat, but seldom exact agreement, in the prevalent interpretation of tradition within Roman circles today. Is it the living consciousness of the Church, as Cardinal Franzelin argued in *De Divina Traditione et Scriptura* (1870)? Or, as Christian Pesch in his *Compendium Theologiae Dogmaticae* (1924) and H. Dieckmann in *De Ecclesia* (1925) prefer, the teaching office of the Church? Or, again, the traditional stream of the Church's rule of faith, as Dr. Karl Adam holds—whose books present very attractively the discussions and definitions of tradition within the Tübingen school? One notable feature in the post-Vatican discussions is the coolness toward Newman's logical theory of development. This once emerged in a curious way. When young Louis Duchesne got into the first of his troubles with the authorities of the Catholic University at Paris, by proving from history that the ante-Nicene fathers were not so implicitly trinitarian as orthodox Roman tradition assumed, he appealed to the example of Cardinal Newman, who already had hinted this. It was an incautious plea. Cardinal Franzelin curtly replied that "as for the distinguished Newman, special lines followed by this venerable man in theology are not to be taken as examples to be followed, and certainly not to be taken over into our seminaries." It was a natural answer from the author of *De Divina Traditione et Scriptura*, however unwelcome

to a historical scholar who had begun by treating his subject as research into truth, not Catholic truth.<sup>40</sup> The fact is that such theories as that of Newman are not felt to be relevant to the Trent view of tradition, much less to be essential to its acceptance. When two monographs on the history and significance of tradition were published in 1931 by a couple of excellent Jesuit scholars,<sup>41</sup> the great English Cardinal's work was practically ignored.

## CHAPTER V

### In the Way?

ORIGINALLY such traditions as we have been surveying were "in the Way." These rites, beliefs, and practices belonged to the path and progress of the faith, as it went from strength to strength. In the vocabulary of rabbinic Judaism, they were part of the *halakha* which had to be followed if safe guidance was required through novel experiences and challenging situations. History shows how at first the faithful generally meet the perplexities of the world with some confidence that these traditions are in line with life. It is supposed that customs of this sacred character still mark the highway, as no others do. But the day dawns when for various reasons they are suspected of being "in the way," in the lower sense of the phrase. An uneasy feeling prevails that what once aided the faith is now impeding the faithful. The awakened mind asks whether this or that cherished category of thought is not coming between us and the truth it once brought near to us, whether in obedience a certain habit of goodness is not losing its impetus. Yesterday may have found the custom a help to mind or conscience; but today wonders if it is not a handicap which is even in danger of proving a hindrance to the living community, as the members face a situation where they are obliged to define or to practice their creed afresh. At critical epochs, when this comes home



to some prophet or group of enlightened spirits, the next step is to do what has to be done in similar upheavals of the social or political sphere; tradition has to be purified, perhaps even cleared away, by free discussion of fundamental principles, till a consecrated custom is replaced by something better for the purpose. Otherwise there is an arrest of progress. As Walter Bagehot once put it, in a different metaphor, "The whole history of civilisation is strewn with creeds and institutions which were invaluable at first, and deadly afterwards. Progress would not have been the rarity it is, if the early food had not been the later poison."<sup>42</sup>

## I

There was no arrest of progress when the issue of the Reformation came to the front. What carried that movement through, in spite of the Tridentine opposition, was an overwhelming conviction that the Christian road must again be the way of holiness in more than name, a high-road where wayfaring men would not err. To secure this, drastic repairs were necessary if the Christian tradition was once more to be straight and plain. The leaders were road menders, working in the interests of those who sought to walk humbly and obediently with their Lord.

It is not yet superfluous to repeat this commonplace. "While the theologically heathen may be those who have no Bible, the morally and essentially heathen are the untaught or unteachable who disdain not only revelation but what revelation stood for among early peoples, namely, funded experience."<sup>43</sup> So a philosophical writer of today contends, identifying heathenism with the spirit of men who worship their own caprices and devices. It is not an

unhelpful diagnosis of the pagan temper in one of its characteristic aspects. But when he proceeds to discover the symptoms of such a fever in the German reformers of the sixteenth century, we can only regard him, as Miss Seward on an historical occasion looked at Dr. Johnson, with "mild but steady astonishment." After asking why "this rebellion of the heathen soul" did not content itself with an open worship of impulse and native will power, instead of talking about an effort to "recover the original essence of Christianity," our philosopher concludes it was "simply the inertia of established prejudice that made people use tradition to correct tradition." Now historical analysts today would not waste time and space on the notion that the Reformation was a mere explosion of political nationalism or a petulant riot of religious individualism. Such an illusion they would be content to leave to the popular literature of misinformation. Whatever Martin Luther may have been, he was anything but a young professor announcing a new course of lectures, much less an insurgent radical of the root-and-branch type. The Friar of Wittenberg and his coadjutors took action only because they saw, or believed that they saw, how the "funded experience" of the Christian revelation had been badly invested and was being carelessly handled by the authorities of the Latin Church. This conviction about the abuses which had profaned the sacred deposit was no novelty in the sixteenth century. It had been held, as indeed it was still held, by thousands of loyal churchmen, outside as well as inside Germany, who did not see their way to abandon the institution. What the Protestant leaders sought to do was to reform or, rather, to transform a situation which threatened to endanger the cath-

olic gospel, unless the accepted tradition was recast. They came forward, as our philosopher himself admits, urging that each member of the Christian Church should "re-interpret the Bible and the practices of the Church" by "renewing them in the light of his personal experience." This private right of judgment was pressed as a standing order of the faith; it was the inalienable right and duty of the laity as well as of priests and monks to exercise this function. The common aim of men like Luther and Calvin was thus to re-form what they knew must have some form, including the contribution of genuine tradition, if it was to possess a medium for operating as a religious force in the world. A firsthand knowledge of what they wrote shows that their protest was neither negative nor due to any inertia, so far as its original motive is concerned. It was a supreme act of Christian faith, on the part of men who had caught sight of a more fundamental Christianity than the contemporary Church of the West represented. "Inertia" is the least relevant term for the conception or the execution of their undertaking, which was at heart a passionate, devout affirmation that the need of the day was a Church where the "funded experience" of a genuinely catholic past could be made available to meet the mental and moral costs of the Christian enterprise in Europe, instead of that fund being left in the hands of an organization which was literally making capital out of solemn truths like pardon and excommunication, and which otherwise was unduly concerned to secure its vested interests in the secular world. The reformers, who never dreamt of being proud rebels, were in the best sense of the term conservative, as they sought to be constructive. Whatever be thought of their methods or aims, this

should be allowed, that the leading spirits shouldered their responsibilities for action "as ever in the great Taskmaster's eye." Indeed, if any of them are to be called wilful, it would have to be, more often than not, in the good sense of that adjective, which was still current in contemporary English. For "wilful" could mean "full of will," like faithful or hopeful. It had not yet ceased to serve the cause of determination and unreserved loyalty. When Tyndale in 1538 wrote his exposition of the first epistle of St. John, for example, he could say, without fear of being misunderstood, that only "by wilful [that is, free and hearty] keeping of the commandment we be sure that we love God and believe in God." On both sides of the struggle there was indeed wilfulness, human nature being what it is—a field where moral indignation is separated by only a hairbreadth from pugnacity, and where perseverance slips into obstinacy as easily as charity into compromise. The spirit of high courage and resolution was too frequently mingled with perversity in these dividing days. Self-interest deflected more or less disinterested aims on the part of religious leaders as well as of political protagonists. Some loved to have the pre-eminence. Others found it more congenial to brandish half-truths than to uphold principles. Yet this smoke rose from a fire which in men like Luther and Melanchthon was not kindled by any proud independence of divine commands for the Church in the past or in the present.

## II

Normally, however, the issues raised by tradition for the way of further advance are encountered by most people in less heroic shape, frequently in some specific

sphere of interest, from art to science, from economics to literature, from politics to religion. Even music may provide an opportunity to appreciate the strain involved in a clash between originality and accepted standards. Thus the theater had once a "re-formed opera," as it was called; it was not a Protestant form of musical drama by any means—for the subjects were mostly episodes in Greek mythology—but operas written by Gluck at Vienna and Paris, as the composer attempted by argument and example to improve upon the traditional Italian opera of the eighteenth century. Gluck's genius did succeed in displacing some conventionalities and abuses of the stage, yet only it was after a sharp challenge to practices against which (to quote his own words) "reason and good sense have vainly protested for long." Whenever the spirit of progress moves on the face of the waters, the broad principles and general considerations of what we term tradition, in its positive as well as in its negative aspects, cease to be unfamiliar.

Literature has many a similar phase of strain and challenge in the interests of advance. "We live in an age so sceptical that, as it determines nothing, so it takes nothing from antiquity on trust." This verdict is from Dryden's "Essay on the Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age," published in 1678, and he pronounces it in order to justify such skepticism. He was still a genuine protestant in literature, objecting to an indiscriminate reverence for the Elizabethan dramatists. He wanted to offer stringent criticism of what he thought were failings and faults in his predecessors, with a view to securing free space for poetry to make new advances on the stage. Why should the art of verse be shackled by artificial traditions? Little

more than a century later, another young poet, also destined to be a laureate, voiced a similar plea. In his "Advertisement to the Lyrical Ballads" of 1798, Wordsworth found himself obliged to maintain that the diction and range of his poetry possessed a right to live, novel as the poems might seem in the judgment of "readers accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers." Why should such readers "suffer the solitary word Poetry, a word of very disputed meaning, to stand in the way of their gratification"? Let them understand that it may cover a simple interest in human passions, incidents, and character; with this in mind let them "consent to be pleased, in spite of that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision" upon how poetry should be dressed and occupied. In both of these cases, particularly in the second, the impatience proved to be healthy. It was justified by its works.

Now and then the problem of tradition may emerge in a more personal and individual light. Thus, half a century ago, an undergraduate in certain European universities who was about to study philosophy used to be told by his tutor that he ought to begin by mastering the discussion of fallacies in the fifth book of Mill's *Logic*, if he hoped to possess an educated mind. He did so, and learned what it means to learn. Possibly it was in the course of this preliminary discipline that he had the additional reward of meeting another book by the same author; he lighted on Mill's *Liberty*, with its stirring pages about progress. So far, so good. When he came to leave the university, especially if he proposed to enter any of the learned professions, he set down that volume on a small list of books

to be read annually for a year or two. He would also add John Morley's austere and challenging monograph on *Compromise*, since a shrewd if limited observation of the world, such as belongs to the early twenties, already warned him that, unless one was on the alert, life at this critical period was as likely to gather moss as momentum. Reason and sense may be all very well, but they may turn out to be little better than worldly wisdom when a career is in the making. The dividing line between accommodation or expediency and honesty is evidently a frontier that requires careful watching. So he would say to himself. And Morley's book put him on his guard. Furthermore, he had the wit to add a third item to his list. Although the passing of a century has superseded some of Emerson's oracles, it has not removed any vitamins from his paper on "The Conservative," with its finely balanced recognition not simply of the need for innovation after innovation but also of the misguidance to which a generous passion for progress is often liable. This essay the youth would ponder side by side with the works of the two Englishmen. If he did so, there was some guarantee that he would be likely to face the practical problem of tradition with intelligence and discrimination.

What cannot be assumed, however, is, in the first place, a realization of the fact that some of the fundamental differences in our Western Christianity start from efforts to draw a circle round Church tradition and, secondly, a recognition that here, as well as in any department of collective action, one test of tradition lies in its capacity to generate a zest for life which produces the authentic throb or thrill. The ecclesiastical problem has been already noted. The other factor, however, has a larger con-

text and must be studied in the light of its background, with an eye to the undercurrents of its sway over the mind. No diagrams or definitions are enough to illuminate its ramified influence; they merely oversimplify the nature of authentic tradition as a force and principle in the wide world where more than ecclesiastical prepossessions are operating.

To an outsider traditions appear at first sight to be quaint and meaningless, as a rule. He notes how miscellaneous they are and how they vary in weight, from the trivial to the significant. Some are social and national idiosyncrasies. Others have become little more than mannerisms. The varieties of tradition embrace many a species, tawdry and noble, provincial and catholic, repellent as well as attractive. If some did not start from superstition, they have lapsed into it, till a rise in moral sensitiveness has at last discredited them. But the critic recognizes one unvarying feature: traditions are never abstract. They belong to experience and history, not to a purely mental zone like metaphysics or science. The soil of abstract ideas is too thin for their growth. Where you meet a tradition is inside the habits of continuous and common human life: in the family, the school, the ship, and the regiment; in royal courts and courts of law; in colleges and parliaments; and, above all, in the texture of religious communities. Traditions live and move in a world of flesh and blood. Even when people play games, even in the theater, tradition has its sway. You touch it in any expression of *esprit de corps*, blowing through some group where men and women have to live or choose to live together for common ends. Tradition represents needs and customs which are believed to be essential to their happi-



ness and welfare, and which, at the lowest level, may have originated in some tabu or craving of the primitive mind, something to be avoided or practiced if people were to be lucky or safe in this dangerous universe. Even when the rise of tradition is an enigma, however, it is never generated nor sustained in an atmosphere of speculative ideas. Tradition is more at home with details of dress and food. While it often takes imaginative forms, it clings to behavior and breathing humanity. For a time, in certain cases for all time, a tradition may not pass into written words; and even when it does carry down words, they are generally words with a song or a story, a command, a direction, for wayfarers, warriors, or worshipers. Tradition may have to deal with books or a Book, but it is never bookish. Furthermore, it affects the individual as a member of the fellowship. On any level, from etiquette or fashion upward, tradition has a purpose in its eye, and the purpose is corporate. Yet, so far from suppressing individuality, tradition as it rises in the scale has a singular power of enabling all sorts and conditions of people to be themselves in serving the common interests of their group. It is a discipline that develops self-discipline. Nowhere is there less fear of human beings being reduced to the level of ciphers in a list of abstractions. The common cause at stake, the joint end to be promoted, calls out the powers of personality, as each learns to make his contribution to the general cause.

The reason for this lies in the very fact that tradition belongs to the realm of action, not of abstraction. There is a place for abstractions—though, by the way, it is absurd to suppose that by using a term like “force” one necessarily purges the mind from what is called anthropo-

morphism. But inside the fellowship of the Church, abstract ideas are out of place. One listens to a psychologist or a theologian in the lecture room deftly playing with terms like "objective" and "subjective," but the throb of reality is felt directly when one enters the sanctuary to join his fellow worshipers as they repeat, "Marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well." Disembodied ideas are no substitute for the ministering angels of the primitive Church's tradition. What was then expressed in terms of an ancient supernaturalism has to be expressed somehow with the same impact on real life. When Cromwell spoke his famous sentence to the sectaries and doctrinaires round him—"It is needful at all times to look at things"—the last word rang out with emphasis. He wanted his supporters to look at "things," at realities, not at abstract theories about Church and State. Let them consider "things," facts of life, not airy notions. Authentic tradition witnesses to the truth that the Protector had in mind. It is as convictions take definite, fitting shape that they hold and move mankind, especially within the sphere of the faith. The Bible never mentions the being of God. "In him we live and move and have our being," the apostle once declared at the Areopagus as he sought some common ground with the Athenians. But, he went on to argue, God moved first; it was to make us live again and move toward Himself and one another as human beings in the new order of the resurrection. Repent of false worship, "inasmuch as he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world justly by a man whom he has destined for this. And he has given proof of this to all by raising him from the dead." Such was the keynote of the apostolic gospel; it was not a cosmic idealism, much

less a cult of reformed Judaism, but the decisive revelation of Jesus and the resurrection. It is our being, not God's, that is mentioned. He is the living God who acts in time with an eternal purpose for us men, the First and the Last, not one to be spoken of in abstract terms. The momentous interval between creation and the judgment is dominated by His active manifestation through Jesus Christ. So did the authentic Christian tradition carry on its anticipation in the Hebrew conviction of the living God.

### III

Authentic tradition has not precisely the same meaning in historical research as within a religious community. For the historical student it denotes a tradition about some event or person in the remote past which, after being tested by a disinterested and thorough examination of the relevant data in the light of fresh discoveries, proves to deserve credit, even though it may have been temporarily accepted as well as rejected for unsatisfactory reasons. Archaeology often contributes to this rehabilitation. So may the finding of a new manuscript or a papyrus fragment. Such a process, no doubt, also obtains in the study of historical Christianity; there is still a disputed question about the exact site of Golgotha, as there is about the pass over the Alps by which Hannibal entered Italy. But authentic tradition means something wider for the faith. In its primary phase, indeed, it is bound up with the historicity of the resurrection. One of the most permanent sentences written by the apostle Paul begins with an "if," simply because for him there was no "if" about it. "If Christ be not risen, then is our

preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." Preaching and faith are vain, he pleaded, when that reality is evaporated from the Church. Gospels and epistles alike, from the very outset, breathed the conviction that Jesus had passed through death to be enthroned as Lord of life, not to be resuscitated. Express this as we may, it is the one belief that gives meaning to the story of the rise and spread of the Christian community, where all sorts of men and women are soon found certain of God's redeeming act in their own history and experience as they verify the passion and victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such a fundamental tradition underlies the earliest traditions. Presently it develops traditions of its own, major and minor, doctrinal and ritual. But on examining any one of these we usually discover that more is at stake than the credibility of factors and details of what may be dogmatically correct or of what may have happened on a given occasion. A religious tradition of Christendom is authentic, in the fullest sense of the term, only as it evokes an adequate response to the reality represented by its belief or practice. When these vibrate, the tradition is valid. Veracity is indeed essential, within the relative limits of proof; but vitality is the supreme note of authenticity. What is the ultimate test? Not that the tradition is being carried on with liturgical precision. Not that it is expressed in technically accurate language. Rather the issue is: does this tradition inspire the worshipers? Does deep call to deep? And does the call persist? From one point of view it may be said that to hold such a tradition shows what we have come to be; it is a proof that we have been living and moving, in some direction. From another and a larger point of view, it reveals what we ought to be,

as we are true to the genuine core of it; and that means a regenerating power.

In biblical reconstruction and ecclesiastical hagiology, as well as in classical archaeology and Oriental history, criticism has breached the walls of this tradition and that, leaving little more than a heap of legendary guesses. On the other hand, it has sometimes rebuilt the walls of a tradition which men thought no longer habitable; or, at least, further research, aided by later discoveries, has laid the foundations for a new dwelling place on ground which was once supposed to be shifting sand. Vitality has been restored to some forms of tradition, and in many cases restored by a combination of frank handling with an emphasis on the object of tradition itself in the community. The parallel may seem remote, but there is a real similarity between the drama and the Church at this point. Every student of Greek drama knows how the great tragedians, especially, were hampered by the inherited formalism of the stage, partly due to religious traditions. He also knows how the stage directions of the House of Molière made actors and actresses continue to play their parts exactly as at the original production of the piece. Some critics have even argued that the Théâtre Français and the Institute or Academy were two exceptions to the rule that the practical idealism of science and politics had ruined historical tradition in France. This is an exaggeration, however. The tradition of the three unities proved a stiff hurdle for the genius of Victor Hugo himself to surmount, and Voltaire, a progressive critic, if there ever was one, had upheld the unities as stoutly as any orthodox priest defended the Tridentine decrees. Nevertheless in France and recently

in Europe there has been a renaissance of the theater; immense advances have been made with regard to such matters as the architecture of the theater, the setting of the play, or the length and content of the drama. And why? Simply because those responsible for dramatic vitality have desired to keep in closer touch with the modern audience than inherited traditions allowed. They have rightly felt that if the drama is to fulfill its true function in society, it cannot afford to act as though it were playing to a mediaeval French or an Elizabethan or even a Victorian public. The play must get across to the audience, and any alteration of tradition is held to be justified if it has that effect. So with religious tradition. Its functions are too vital to be discharged on a level where it has come to be regarded as a graceful background for living men and women of the present day, even if that background has cherished associations and valuable properties of the past. More should be expected and provided. There must be room for direct modes of appeal in the interests of effectiveness, till the throb of actuality comes through again; and this involves greater freedom as well as variety in traditional forms of service, together with a vivid use of the imagination in order to present the realities of the faith.

There is a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together, said the nameless Preacher of the Old Testament, a time fixed for pulling down a building as well as for constructing a house. Both actions have their place in the divine order. But, even when men are agreed that today is one such period, the difficulty remains. What materials can we afford to drop in rebuilding an organization of the faith, and what should

we demolish? It is a difficulty that has been responsible for many a misjudgment in history. "The stone that the builders rejected" has ominous associations. Nothing is more common than throwing aside stones that ought to have been kept—nothing except the mistake of retaining what should have been dropped from an outworn structure of tradition. If by good tradition we mean what draws people together and holds them together in the worship and fellowship of God, then a good form of this may have to be freed from evil associations which in course of time have compromised, perhaps even corrupted, its influence, associations often due to a sincere desire to render it more practical and efficient in view of later developments of life. Few words of our Lord had sunk more deeply into the memory of the early Church than his sentence to the Jewish authorities, "You have made the word of God of none effect by your tradition." It had been spoken indeed

Ere His agony to those that swore  
Not by the temple but the gold, and made  
Their own traditions God, and slew the Lord.

But sometimes within His own Church people felt that these warning words might have a meaning for themselves. It was a serious stirring of conscience, often with more heat than light; occasionally a feeling which prompted narrow, unhistorical interpretations in theory and practice, as though the faith could afford to do without all traditions whatsoever. Some branches of the Church are less fruitful than they might be, for having yielded to this unwise purging of tradition. On the other hand, when "the word of God" is taken in its full sense, it is evident that there have been growths of tradition in

Christendom which ought to have been more carefully tested before being incorporated, or which still demand reconsideration, if not elimination, whatever be the cost to inherited prejudices, social, ecclesiastical, or political.

## IV

There is no occasion for scientific historians of science to deride religion especially as the outstanding representative of opposition to new ideas. No one denies that there have been some lamentable examples of it, both in controversy with science and inside the Church itself. But in all fairness it may be asked if innovations have been invariably welcomed inside literature or art or science itself. When a new discovery in astronomy or physics or geology or even medicine has been announced, has it been hailed with open arms by scientists themselves? One seems to recollect cases to the contrary. Richard Owen was surely more opposed and more dangerous to Darwin than any bishop of the day was. At the same time religion, by its very essence, is tempted to attach undue authority to the past. Euripides fairly noted this characteristic when he made the old priest Tiresias in the *Bacchae* protest nervously, against the advent of a new movement, "It is not for us to reason cleverly about the gods; no reasoning will ever overthrow the cherished tradition of our fathers, which is as old as time itself, no, not although our wisdom is derived from subtle minds." This represents the almost instinctive attitude of ecclesiastical organizations and established institutions at the approach of new ideas.

To follow foolish precedents, and wink  
With both our eyes, is easier than to think,



for those who have inherited a great religious tradition.

Not that it is confined to such quarters. Elsewhere people display a curious aversion to admitting the need for an active use of the mind in dealing with what is traditional. "Remember," Marcus Aurelius once wrote, "there is to be no 'parents to children' method; that is, no mere 'as we have received from our fathers' method" (iv.46). Such perfunctory acceptance of what has been handed down, the emperor argued, is not for men who are alive and mature in a living world; they must be prepared to examine and sift the traditional, unless they mean to go through life half asleep. But this holds specially true of any religion which overvalues tradition. Not so long ago, when Miguel de Unamuno, the Spanish thinker, surveyed the materialism of the masses throughout France and Italy as well as his own beloved land, his analysis forced from him this confession in his *Essays and Soliloquies*: "I do not know what is to be hoped for from people who have been materialized by a long indoctrination of implicit Catholic faith, where beliefs are a matter of routine—people in whom the inner spring appears to be exhausted, that inward disquietude which distinguishes the essential Protestant spirit." What the Spanish thinker views with wistful admiration here is not the love of asking questions for the sake of questions, but the deep conviction that a faith afraid of honest inquiry is not enough, and that no organization is true to the ethos of the Church if, however sincerely, it seeks to keep its members for the safety of their souls upon the level of unquestioning credence. To regard everything in the beliefs and practices of the faith as an open question is, at this time of day, a wilful disregard of what ex-

perience has gained. Christianity is not a welter of optional choices. But it is no less fatal to the health of Christian tradition to shut out the fresh air of thought and inquiry. Decided opinions engender drowsiness, especially if they have been decided for us by other people. They are the staple of life in the sacred community. But locusts are none the worse for being eaten along with wild honey.

When challengers propose improvements in the Way of life, the cry goes up, "Away with them!" Let anyone dare to question what has hitherto been regarded as a final expression of great certainties or as the permanent form of such beliefs in practice, and will not many instantly suspect and resent such a discipline? They will regard it as a petulant outburst of impatience with the accepted order of the faith. This may be so, but it need not be. In its genuine moments such an impulse represents a native instinct for some richer measure of reality and vitality. As Dante puts the matter in the fourth canto of the *Paradiso*:

Nasce per quello, a guisa di rampollo,  
a piè del vero il dubbio; ed è natura  
che al sommo pinga noi di collo in collo.

The metaphor is mixed, and the stanza comes from one of the dry, argumentative patches of theology in the poem; but the sense is clear. "From the very stock [or bole] of truth buds a spray of questioning; and thus we are naturally urged, from peak to peak, to reach the summit." The poet holds that what stirs further inquiry is faith itself. Any experience or attainment, as it is real, will be sure to rouse an instinctive desire for some still

higher outlook, in order to overcome difficulties that cannot fail to be raised by initial visions of divine truth. To disbelieve and discourage such native aspirations is to hold up the faith from making progress. Besides it is to imperil human nature by exposing it to unchecked powers of suggestion. Credulity leaves masses of people in any century, not excluding our own, liable to be thrilled by adroit propaganda, political or religious. One outcome of this often is that even "new customs," if a commoner may repeat the shrewd sentence of Lord Sands,

Though they be never so ridiculous,  
Nay, let 'em be unmanly, yet are followed.

During the early stages of Islam, when, as we have noted, a crop of luxuriant legends was springing up about the Prophet's directions for life, one candid Muslim scholar remarked that "in nothing do we see pious men more given to falsehood than in tradition." <sup>44</sup> Already the same tendency had appeared in early Christianity. As Jeremy Taylor dryly put it, within some circles of the early Church, from the second century onward, "It was usual to pretend to tradition, and easier pretended than confuted, and I doubt not but oftener done than discovered." Many a novelty of legend came into vogue under the guise of tradition. For "nothing," as he went on to say, "is so credulous as piety and timorous religion"; that is, religion threatened by any criticism of its principles or cherished usages. Furthermore, when the fresh custom has acquired the prestige of centuries, and is supposed to be sanctioned by what it professes to safeguard, nothing is more difficult than to loosen its hold over the majority

of the faithful. Tradition is now nervously identified with some legendary phase or expression of the faith, and defenders of that faith are too often reckless of truth not merely in fabricating some writings but in altering the text of others; they are tempted to be unscrupulous first of all in accepting a practice and then in refusing to sift it later. "The more ancient the abuse," as Voltaire wrote in *Les Guèbres*, "the more sacred it is"—"plus l'abus est antique, et plus il est sacré." The result is that things are done and stories continue to be told in the supposed interests of piety; and this in all sincerity, for many of the most foolish as well as of the most cruel things in the world are said and done by people of convinced sincerity. Once the fact that really matters is considered to be the power of a tale or rite to edify, there is a widespread indisposition to question or to discuss the validity of such useful, accepted traditions. Let things be done as they always have been done, and because they have been so done. Such is the rubric of the status quo. It is derided by the sons of the morning, and defended as heartily by the old school. The sensible parent's motto for dealing with grown-up children, "Stand by them, and stand out of their way," has no meaning for such traditionalists, who get in everybody's way as they try to make precedent the rule of the road. When they do not get their own way, some are indignant, others plaintive; but all are troublesome, actively or passively.

Of the two extremes, it might be supposed that it is the reactionary against whom we have less occasion to be upon our guard. Surely he has been pilloried and exposed in the open court of the world. Has not the im-

petuous rebel or reformer often had milder treatment than the ultraconservative, partly because there is a dash and sparkle about his very exaggerations? He may annoy people by disturbing the pool at any rate, but he is alive, they feel, and there may be a disposition to be charitable toward his superficial treatment of the ages. It is the sort of generosity which often proves dangerous, as it withholds criticism and discipline. Still, the man who can be described, as Akenside was described by Johnson, as "a lover of contradiction, and no friend to anything established," gets off more easily than the reactionary, who is a popular target for the arrows of derision. The traditional temper has not passed without remark. No one, it may be urged, requires at this time of day to be warned against the folly and peril of adhering blindly to the status quo. Take the case of the English, for example. The aversion to sudden or drastic changes, a predilection for the middle way, a dislike of new ideas or of any ideas at all, is said to be one of their characteristics. Listen to Anglophobes in France or in the United States, and you will find that, next to hypocrisy, this is the favorite butt for their shafts of irony. The English themselves have not been content to hint that conservatism is perhaps international. They have been as forward as foreigners to criticize such a tendency in their make-up. "The enquiry in England," Blake once wrote, "is not whether a man has talents and genius, but whether he is passive and polite and a virtuous ass." English literature abounds with cartoons of the traditionalist, among the clergy and the laity, etched in gentle ridicule and acid satire. Generations have laughed at the vicar in Crabbe's *Borough*:

Habit with him was all the test of truth;

"It must be right. I've done it from my youth."

Questions he answered in as brief a way,

"It must be wrong—it is of yesterday."

Then there is the squire, of whom Galsworthy wrote in his *Country House* that "a new idea invading his mind is met by a rising of the whole population, and either prevented from landing or, if on shore, instantly taken prisoner." Such self-criticism has enriched our verse and prose. The English do not seem to be unaware of this trait or tendency. They are even amused by it. And yet this is not enough. Yes, it may be fairly retorted, they laugh or smile at the weakness. But do they leave it? A caricature does not mean a cure necessarily. A sense of humor is one thing; a sense of shame is quite another. Once people have scoffed at some flaw in themselves or in their social group, they may imagine that they have absolved themselves from doing any more about it. As if a thing ceased to be dangerous and disgraceful when it was admitted to be absurd! Yet are there not congregations which positively relish sermons against popular vices in their own business or social life, provided that the preacher is daring and pointed in his denunciations? It becomes a form of weekly entertainment. Many in the same way are well satisfied to feel enlightened and liberal as they read or listen to satirical exposures of any national foible, without being roused to take action against it in themselves or in their neighbors. They take an aesthetic enjoyment in tirades which are called prophetic, and that is about all. Of nothing is this more true than of traditionalism. The mere fact that we know what can be said against it, our very familiarity with illustra-

tions of its peril and folly, is no absolute guarantee that we are likely to shun it at any particular crisis. The temper is too insidious.

There have been crises in the history of the Church as well as of the State at which later generations have watched

Custom starving truth,  
And blind authority beating with its staff  
The child that might have led him.

But truth is not to be starved; and the child grows up to be mature, with an authority of his own. Otherwise, where would we be today? When this happy result has occurred, it has been due to the vigorous spirit which realizes that a point of view ought to be pointed, instead of being a mere opinion to be toyed with in a corner. A point of view is a thought that pricks to action in the open, penetrating any husks of conventionality. And these husks may be far from flimsy. In the beginning of the seventeenth century Francis Bacon declared that investigation into tradition was a branch of learning "where there is much controversy, but many times little enquiry." Toward the end of the century, after controversy on this matter had been pouring through England, George Savile, the first Marquis of Halifax, satirically reminded some high-flying churchmen that by the spread of education among the laity as well as among dissenters "the world is grown saucy, and expects reasons, and good ones too, before they give up their own opinion to other men's dictates." Still, he quickly added, "in some well chosen and dearly beloved auditories good resolute nonsense, backed with authority, may prevail." <sup>45</sup> True, this is not confined to

one side of the investigation. No one can be more dogmatic than the assailant of dogma; the confident appeal to "the results of modern scholarship" may conceivably have as little real weight behind it as a pious endorsement of Church fathers and councils. Nevertheless, in this twentieth century of ours, while the challenge to ecclesiastical use and wont is sometimes better than the alleged reasons for the attack, there are still quarters in which the "dearly beloved" are to be found listening to "good resolute nonsense" talked in magisterial tones on behalf of tradition.

Literary critics who do not care for the moralizing streak in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* allow the presence of genuinely romantic merits in his earlier piece, the *Morte d'Arthur* of 1842. Be that as it may, there is something for us in this poem, where King Arthur gives counsel to "the last of all his knights," Sir Bedivere. The defeat of the Arthurian cause in Lyonesse has left the knight disconsolate, because "the good old times are dead." But the monarch looks forward to new times, though he cannot hope to see them. The goodly fellowship of the Round Table has indeed gone; it is useless to try and revive that organization. Fresh forms of rule and order must be devised for Britain, to maintain the faith and welfare of the people. The political metal must be poured into other molds. For

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

Only, the dying king insists, there is one good custom of the old order which is never to be abandoned. He



singles out one tradition to be held at all costs and in all generations, amid "new men, strange faces, other minds." Forecast the future as we may, drop this or that form of activity; but the vital habit of prayer must be exempt from change, except in the direction of fresh practice and wider insight.

More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friends?  
For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

These lines serve to illustrate the historical truth that, whatever alterations occur in the context of a faith, there is an unchanging content transmitted from age to age. It also suggests the further consideration that prayer itself is susceptible of fresh expression. For as prayer is vital, it must be recast for the growing needs of its votaries. Otherwise its forms may linger on, without keeping the faithful alive to the realities of the new order which it ought to be serving. Conservatism is naturally and justly on the alert with regard to devotional forms. But even here it has to be asked whether the contemporary practice and conception of prayer is "in the way," in the right sense of the phrase or in the wrong. Occasions do present themselves when, for a custom as for an individual, change is really the one way of being consistent. The problem is invariably to know if this is such a time or not and, if it is, how it is to be handled.

"Mutatis mutandis" is a glib phrase, easy to put on paper or to declaim. It is an extremely difficult policy to carry out in practical life. What ought to be changed, if anything? The lawyer knows, as he alters a document, for he has his principles and instructions. But when we take over his technical phrase, we soon discover that in religion something may be altered or omitted which, we afterward find, and in some cases find too late, would have been a source of inspiration in new circumstances. Certain ties are loosened, certain customs are relaxed, for worse rather than for better. This always creates a nice problem for judgment, but never more so than in matters devotional.

## V

In his fifty-fifth epistle Augustine lamented to Januarius that a variety of burdensome, artificial usages had been growing up around the few, simple sacraments of the Church, till Christians were nearly as perplexed as Jews over the multiplicity of rites and ceremonies. That was in 400 A.D. In sixteenth-century England, Cranmer appealed to this precedent as he penned his preface, "Of Ceremonies," to the Book of Common Prayer. "What would St. Augustine have said if he had seen the ceremonies of late days used among us, whereunto the multitude used in his time was not to be compared? This our excessive multitude of ceremonies was so great, and many of them so dark, that they did more confound and darken than set forth Christ's benefits unto us." It was his justification for simplifying the devotional practice of the English Church.

The skill and care of the Roman Church in dealing

with its breviary offers another striking case of the same readiness to improve and adapt the old to the new. But we may choose proofs of how the English-speaking churches have felt free to introduce verbal changes, when a word or phrase has become unsuitable or even misleading.

Thus in the communion collect beginning "Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings" no one can object to "Direct us," since in English "prevent" has long ceased to mean anything except "hinder." In the *Te Deum*, again, it is not difficult to understand why the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States has found it advisable to introduce one or two alterations. Instead of "thine honourable, true, and only Son," the prayerbook reads "thine adorable, true, and only Son"—rightly, for, although "adorable" hardly conveys the deep awe of the Latin "*venerandum*," it avoids the secular associations which unfortunately have gathered round "honorable." Similarly "Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb" becomes "Thou didst humble thyself to be born of a Virgin." These may be ranked as legitimate exercises of flexibility in preserving a classical form of prayer which has to survive changes of language and of country. On the other hand, who would dream of restoring what appears to have been the original reading, "Make them to be rewarded [*"munerari"*] with thy saints in glory everlasting"? It is true that one Irish manuscript of the ninth century, reading "*intrare*," may preserve what became "*munerari*" or "*numerari*"—"Make them to enter with thy saints into glory everlasting." Yet the choice lies between "rewarded" and "numbered." The former was traditional until, in the wake of an English tenth-century

manuscript, some printed breviaries toward the end of the fifteenth century read "numbered," which was taken over from the Sarum breviaries by the Book of Common Prayer in 1549. English worshipers since then have used no other form, and only a pedant would propose to alter it today. In any case "numbered" is wider than "rewarded," even though the Latin phrase ending with "munerari" were to be rendered "Make them to be endowed with glory everlasting in company with thy saints."<sup>46</sup> It is uncertain whether "numerari" was a scribe's blunder for "munerari" or part of a deliberate liturgical insertion in the text—uncertain and unimportant. Four centuries have fixed "numbered" as a tradition in the English rite.<sup>47</sup>

Again, in this connection, a proposal has been unofficially made which rises out of the attitude of some moderns to the custom of saying grace before meals. This devout habit, though without any basis in the Torah, prevailed in the days of Jesus and was carried on by Christians no less than in the circles of rabbinism. To thank God for the food before one, indeed after the meal also, was felt to be a godly practice, both in private and in public. Like all such customs, however, it may become so formal that reciting or improvising a grace seems to lose all meaning, and the question is raised whether it ought not to be dropped from public use, at any rate. Most readers will recollect how Charles Lamb in his *Elia* essay on "Grace before Meats" and Anthony Trollope in the nineteenth chapter of *Doctor Thorne* both suggested this reform more or less seriously in the interests of reality, by way of protest against a religious tradition which had ceased to be vital. Here, it is urged, we have a

habit which has become for most of us today no more than a piece of conventionality. Once it had meaning, as it voiced a religious instinct. Now it is an empty shell upon the whole. So plead some. Yet many will hope that life can be still breathed into public graces.

Finally all this bears on the language used, not by devotion but about devotion. "There is life, and there are books." So we are told by some. Generally the first three words have a ring of relief and challenge, while the last four sound disparaging, almost with a closing note of what Keats once called "an undersong of disrespect"—disrespect in this case not for public opinion but for methods of writing which have become antiquated or affected. The sentence voices a warning against books that are too bookish, too self-conscious, too remote from the common ways and interests of mankind. It is a healthy remonstrance against traditional verbiage, when style is allowed to sink into the vocabulary and mannerisms of a coterie. And from time to time this protest is timely in the religious world. It strikes at the printed page even more directly than at the pulpit. For various reasons writing about the realities of God and faith has a distressing tendency to become unreal, or at least to sound as though it were unreal. Some authors will persist in using language that has faded, especially metaphors that are no longer effective in contemporary life, and the result is a consecrated jargon. This was one of the symptoms noted by John Foster in the candid diagnosis which he called an "Essay on the Aversion of Men of Taste to Evangelical Religion." In the third letter of the series he put his finger on the harm done by theological writers who indulged their fondness for an unwholesome diction and dialect

which was sometimes so biblical that it ceased to be natural. Why, he asked, should one expect men of the world (in the good sense of the phrase) to be attracted by uncouth and old-fashioned phraseology? Why, for the matter of that, should the saints themselves be offered pages of counsel and argument that are not as straight, simple, and vital in expression as they are in aim? It is a hundred years since Foster died, but still this flaw survives. To mention but a single instance, are any books on the theological shelf less inspiring than treatises upon inspiration? Their only serious rivals are the ordinary manuals upon English prosody, where the tedium of technique contrives as a rule to deaden any thrill or throb of living verse.

## VI

The full situation is this, not merely a question of getting some parts of tradition out of the way, or of replacing them by apt equivalents, but of vivifying other parts, which are an obstacle on account of those who are responsible for handling them. Church services may be profaned by those who administer them, till the effect is to rouse doubt instead of devotion. Such was the impression made upon Pater's young hero by the great gathering at Chartres, where the clergy had met to discharge with skill and taste their functions under the pontifical indifference of Monseigneur Charles Guillard. He noted "the assumption that there was sanctity in everything the kindly prelate touched." The young acolyte saw this was "part of the well-maintained etiquette of the little ecclesiastical court. But, as you meet in the street faces that are like a sacrament, so there are faces, looks, tones of voice, among dignified priests as well as among other people, to hear or

look upon which is to feel the hypothesis of an unseen world impossible." When Gaston de Latour watched his bishop, he was reminded of an old Roman augur smiling to his confederates. Contrast that with R. H. Hutton's account<sup>48</sup> of the impression made upon him at Lincoln's Inn when for the first time he heard F. D. Maurice preach. His voice and manner in reading the service as well as in the sermon that followed "have lived in my memory since, as no other voice and manner have ever lived in it." Hutton instances the emphasis on the familiar words of the general confession, "and there is *no* health in *us*." Maurice threw "the weight of the meaning on to the last word," striking "the one note of his life—the passionate trust in eternal help—as it had never been struck in my hearing before." It was the influence of Maurice to which the editor of the *Spectator* owed his soul. He soon passed from an unsatisfying unitarianism into the rich catholicism of the English Church, and the relief was primarily due to the manner in which traditional phrases in the liturgy were invested with spiritual reality. The thrilling intensity of Maurice's preaching, as he humbly communicated what he believed to be his message, poured through his reading of the service beforehand, so that what others mumbled, to the disrepute of tradition, became a vital source of impressiveness. Maurice never patterned the liturgy. It came to his lips from the heart. This incident may seem simple and even trivial, but in the light of psychology it is immensely significant. Any revision of the Prayerbook should mean more than verbal changes. It ought somehow to provide for a fresh personal realization of how much depends upon worshipers entering and being helped to enter into

the meaning of what their lips repeat in the service. "Form," as Maurice himself rightly claimed in another connection, "may be more spiritual than the absence of form." At any rate it is not the fault of tradition here or elsewhere if it is allowed to lapse into a convention.

The issue is far deeper than one of ritual or no ritual, or of reducing ritual to a bare minimum in the interests of securing inwardness of spirit. Carlyle's blast blows with timely effect here. No one emptied the vocabulary of scorn and abuse upon formalism more trenchantly than he did, as he derided red tape in all departments of life, the respect for belief in existing institutions as the last word in politics, and conventionality with its paralyzing effect on religion. Sometimes he allowed himself to write as though the Church upheld modern as well as ancient traditions that were hampering any advance of the human spirit. He may not have had patience enough to grasp the significance of habit and the function of inherited custom in human life throughout the centuries. Yet it was Carlyle who a hundred years ago, in a famous chapter of *Past and Present*, paused to recall the other side. He reminded his readers that "formulas, as we call them, have a reality in human life. They are real as the very skin and muscular tissue of a man's life; and a most blessed indispensable thing, so long as they have vitality withal, and are a living skin and tissue to him. . . . In general, the more completely cased with formulas a man may be, the safer, happier is it for him. Thou who, in an All of rotten formulas, seemest to stand nigh bare, having indignantly shaken off the superannuated rags and unsound callosities of formulas, consider how thou too art still clothed." The bearing of this upon the traditional element in worship is



obvious. The craving to get rid of forms does not inevitably make for inwardness, however it is justified upon occasion as a reaction against a one-sided elaboration of ritual and liturgies. There is a sort of ritual even in what is termed "free prayer," a ritual which differs from a liturgy not merely because it is unwritten but because it is indistinguishable from the overflow of the sermon. It was Mrs. Elizabeth Fry who once wrote in her journal, "Bitter experience has proved to me that Friends do rest too much on externals" (she meant of speech and dress). Make religion as formless, even as wordless, as possible, it will breed conventions of its own. Simplicity may become as artificial as an elaborate ritual. There is a shallow simplicity as well as a deep one, just as there are forms of prayer charged with the spirit, and forms devoid of it—often the same forms.

## VII

At any upturn, then, it is well to turn over in one's mind a few relevant considerations:

(1) For good as well as for evil, in morals no less than in manners, what is cogent is at first what plays on the mind without having been questioned. What people do, or refrain from doing, is the result of suggestion, unconsciously inherited from their environment.

(2) To imagine that it is easy to escape or to induce others to escape from this phase, once we become conscious of it, is a delusion. Those who imagine that superstitions, for example, can be swept aside by a few strokes from the brush of enlightenment never realize that lower traditions are deeply entrenched in civilization, beyond the reach of mere argument—the reason being that at certain stages

of society they have some function to discharge. Thus opposition to a reform rallies all manner of supporters to the status quo, far more than obscurantists and indolent persons. Surely Sir James Frazer has not written *Psyche's Task* in vain. The pioneers of progress ought to be aware of the extent to which ages of use and wont have equipped conservatism.

(3) It is only by enjoying the right to put questions, in view of a projected change, that one learns to put the right questions. And to know how to ask the right questions is a third part of education. This indeed requires, if possible, a guide, philosopher, and friend, as Plato long ago taught the world; not one, be it a society or a director of life, who provides the proper answers offhand, but one who encourages serious questioning and who is able to indicate the quarter where the ultimate truth is likely to become visible.

(4) The right of Christians to have belief means that they are convinced by the truth, not simply of the truth, that God's gracious will is manifested in His Son, in what Jesus said and did and stood for. The object of revelation was not to impart information about any object, not even about Himself, but to be so understood by His people that His will should be done on earth as it is in heaven, without hindrance from idleness or complacency.

(5) The history of revelation shows that tradition and vision are not incompatible in the spiritual domain. A living, learning faith requires the antimony of both. Any dynamic phase involves and produces a static expression of its own, which in turn is vitalized by a readiness to welcome fresh experiences of power within the sphere of the original Spirit.

(6) At the same time, a fine tradition easily loses itself in mere mannerisms. The great genius, in art or in music, for example, creates his school of supreme value, but his immediate followers commonly fall below his level as they attempt to reproduce his effects; while his spirit is admired by later generations, there is a perceptible decline in originality and power. Raphael is a case in point, and there are other well-known instances. Certain methods of the genius are copied, often with success; but a mannerism creeps into the work of those who sincerely aim at carrying on his principles of line and color. And this applies to more than an individual achievement. It is to be traced in the collective traditions of civilization. What is sublime or fresh or moving in them for a while has soon a way of running out into the bogs and sands of a reproduction which is little more than formal or banal.

(7) While tradition at its best reflects the long experience of a faith which has weathered ages, only as Christianity is lived in every fiber does its tradition become intelligible and attractive.

Such reflections on the duty and the difficulties of reform indicate that, when something is felt to be in the way, it belongs to a fault or defect either in the tradition itself or in the lives of those who nominally uphold it. The latter is seldom so glaring as the former, but it is none the less serious. How, for example, can there be any thrill about tradition if one maintains it as Roland Graeme did, in *The Abbot*, when he still belonged to the Roman faith, adhering "to the form of his religion, rather because he felt it would be dishonorable to change that of his fathers, than from any rational conviction or sincere belief of its mysterious doctrines"? The vital traditions of the

faith that go back to what God in Christ has done for man and what He requires man to do for Him, as man belongs to His cause, may be ancient and honorable, but they become a handicap rather than a help if they are left alone. To grow and glow, they require loyalty; and loyalty implies a mind open to the ends which dogmas and traditions are designed to serve. Hard thinking has no substitute here. Yet, even so, those who have done the best service to dogma or tradition by argument have generally been engaged in the practical service of the community, apart from which neither is intelligible. Toward the close of a treatise on education prepared by Zwingli in August, 1523, for the benefit of his stepson, the Swiss leader penned one of those sentences which carry far and wide beyond their original setting. "It is not the business of a Christian to be talking in lofty terms about dogmas, but always to be undertaking by God's help what is hard and great" (*Christiani hominis est non de dogmatis magnifice loqui sed cum deo ardua semper ac magna facere*). Here is a high saying, for vital "dogmata" press "ardua ac magna" on life; but Zwingli himself did not live on any lower level.

A similar spirit is expected from the rank and file as well as from leaders. Some years ago a movement was started in England by enthusiasts who would induce the Government to provide small endowments for young writers of promise, that they might be free to develop their native powers instead of having to do hack work for a living. It sounded generous and wise. But Thomas Hardy was among those who opposed the project, on the ground that this might well defeat the very ends of literature. One effect of the relationship, he held, would

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be to cramp originality. As he put it, "the highest flights of the pen are often, indeed mostly, the excursions and revelations of souls uncommitted to life; while the natural tendency of a Government would be to encourage acquiescence in life as it is." Now "acquiescence in life as it is" cannot be readily identified with any of the diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church. Many superficial observers do identify it with tradition, whereas something is wrong with any church or community when tradition is expected to provide a foothold and not a stimulus. Whatever be the scale of operations or the end in view, this is a grave misconception. For the vogue which it enjoys, some narrow or mechanical definition of tradition may be responsible, perhaps a definition which defenders of the status quo have hastily constructed in order to preserve a truth or practice. But it may also be the result of failing to make a proper response to some real form of tradition. Sound tradition, like other good things, may be kept in ways that are not good. Thus, when tradition is received with little more than civil acquiescence or formal deference by its supporters, the spell of the past may persist for a while, but only for a while, and never with anything like the living *élan* or thrill of energy which is the supreme justification for its existence. Those who are more responsible than anyone else for the discredit that befalls tradition are the complacent and the conventional, not the rebels. At every clash between revolutionaries and reactionaries, the criterion of judgment is to be sought and found in the quality of the throb that invariably accompanies authentic tradition as it plays its part in human affairs. Men are not satisfied to be told that this or that tradition is correct. They must find it to

be quickening, in direct touch with the beating heart of enterprise and action. Nothing is so conservative as a seed, nothing so packed with growth and change and promise. But the seed reveals itself in the soil, not when it is kept for safety's sake inside a dry envelope of botanical instructions and explanations.



## CHAPTER VI

### Then and Now

THE time comes when men realize for the first time that what was then "now" is now "then." This may be a welcome or an unwelcome surprise. It may come home to them gradually or it may be forced on their notice with a sudden shock, either of relief or of disappointment, at some break in their experience. It is a truth that steals across the mind of some individuals quietly in private life—at a marriage or a death, for example—while others become conscious of it as the result of an abrupt crisis in public affairs, when it is useless to deny that things will never be the same again. But, however and whenever life encounters the definite sense of change from then to now, the transition means less to some people than to others. Such a perception of the shift from past to present is at once a test of quality and an opportunity, as men prove insensitive or all the more responsive to the vital issue of tradition.

#### I

Some on different levels hail "now" at the expense of "then." At such intervals it is a curious fact that certain natures manage to live in and for the present, between a dead yesterday and an unborn tomorrow. For a time they seem content to ignore what lies behind them, in their

enjoyment of the passing hour, and seldom trouble to forecast the future. While their neighbors may be infatuated with illusions about the past or the future, they are satisfied with the sweet mediocrity of today. Indeed "now" is the antithesis to "no longer" rather than to "not yet," in their minds. Memories do not cling to them, even memories of what may have been pleasant and creditable. By temperament or training they are rarely disposed to indulge in reminiscences. How the ancient Romans could invest the word "*antiquus*" with any associations of honor as well as of age, they cannot and they do not care to understand. Beside them, however, are more serious men and women who leap to their feet as a fresh epoch dawns. "Arise, shine, for thy light has come" is the order of the day, which they repeat to themselves and to their fellows. They, too, shake off any reminder of the past as sentimental and superfluous, though it is for nobler reasons; if they clear antiques out of their house of life, it is to make way for a new tenant. They see so much to be done, and done at once, that they are impatient of any further interest in yesterday that would divert their minds from the urgent, palpitating present. The call of today is so clear and loud for awakened souls that it ought, they hold, to drown any echoes from what now (thank God) lies behind the present living hour. They would rather create history than write it or study it. When Emerson wrote in his journal on the eighteenth of October, 1836, "Let us postpone everything historical to the dignity and grandeur of the present hour," he was their secular prophet. What does the new light do but make the shadows of history darker? Better walk and work in that light than talk about what it has banished. And, in many

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cases, what is recent, the latest discovery or theory of the day, is taken to be the best working hypothesis.

These two classes represent perhaps the extremes of the majority. In general opposition to them are members of a group who find a challenge no less than a treasure or a refuge in the recollected past. Clough's familiar lines are not vital enough for their spirit:

Alas! the great world goes its way,  
And takes its truth from each new day.

It is not our way, they protest. But they will not moan "Alas!" over the vagaries of the hour. So far from deploring with a sigh, much less sharing, the assumption that the new is more likely to be true because it is new, they will insist that a novelty may easily turn out to be no more than an ancient truism masquerading in some attractive modern guise. Indeed they possess a positive reason for declining to dismiss the stages of previous experience as irrelevant to thought about the immediate issues of the hour. Within Christendom, for example, they may not be sure whether the Lord bade His followers pray for their "daily bread." He may have meant, so they are told, "bread for the morrow." But of this they are reasonably certain, that when He compared an efficient minister of the Church to "a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old" He did say "and old." There is no full stop after "new" in the text or in life. Which means one or other of two things: either that what is new to one generation may be really an old truth revealed afresh, or that aspects of new truth often require to be presented in focus with some earlier and partial disclosure if they are to be acceptable. Only so

can due provision be made for the Household of the faith.

People who take this view find in their thoughtful moments that to recall what has gone by acts as a moral stimulus. Sacred memories serve to remind them of standards which they once inherited and to which some fresh loyalty still is owed, if the present is to be efficiently served. More than that, reflection occasionally furnishes an incentive to set aside an outmoded habit in favor of something which appears more inward and adequate. In any case, whether the issue is religious or political, the saving of the sane is to be conscious that spirits in a hurry, who ignore the nexus between "then" and "now," do so at their own peril. There is a widespread instinct in human nature to hesitate about sacrificing experience on the altar of hope. One does not indeed require to have read far and wide to know how, long before Bergson floated his theory of *durée* (for which "duration" or "length of time" is such an ambiguous and even misleading equivalent in our English), unphilosophic souls often had a dim but persistent feeling that the past might well prove to be more dynamic than some of their bright contemporaries were disposed to allow, and that, except in the case of scientific discoveries, little good is done to the great world upon the whole by notions that were never heard of till this morning. Short and easy ways of effecting a change or reform are apt to end in long trouble for the next generation. Hasty improvisations which in lordly fashion dispense with experience have an awkward way of tripping up those who are at their beck and call.

Good counsel for today lies in the prophet Jeremiah's warning words to Israel of old, when he gave them this oracle of the Lord: "Stand in the ways [at the cross-

roads] and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein [look for the old path, ask for the good road and take it], and ye shall find rest to your souls [so shall you be safe and prosper]." The great prophets were not always proposing innovations or reforms.<sup>49</sup> Sometimes that was their commission; Jeremiah himself had his oracle of the new covenant. But these responsible guides of the nation had also to call a halt. "Stand," stop a moment. On occasion they had to protest against novelties of worship which broke away from the tried, traditional religion, against methods of winning God's favor which had never been properly laid out. The metaphor is taken from the desert. There it might be a matter of life or death if a traveler failed to reach water before nightfall. Life, it is implied, is not a casual stroll. It is a journey with an end in view, a pilgrimage, where there is always a risk of wayfarers swerving off to follow some fresh track or inviting bypath which may end, as it did for Bunyan's Christian and Hopeful, by plunging them into doubt and despair. At any crisis in a nation's fortunes this is a special temptation, to have recourse to false forms of worship, sometimes grim and sometimes silly; masses of people turn to hectic delusions about the supernatural, to superstitions like magic or luck, as substitutes for moral obedience to God's directions for life. In the heated air of panic or depression, such illusions of the occult make a dangerous appeal. As Jeremiah again urged, once the old path of loyalty to the Lord is not given a fair trial, it will be abandoned for deceptive cults, and the result is national disaster:

My people have forgotten me,  
and sacrificed to no-gods.  
So they stumble as they pass  
along the old path,  
and then take to bypaths of their own,  
badly made;  
till their country goes to ruin.

A perfunctory or divided worship, even of the true God, brings its own punishment; it leads to some fatal pursuit of novelties. The history of popular religion has been marked and still is marked by instances of this aberration.

## II

What happens when a different world of thought means a world of indifference to beliefs and practices hitherto regarded as paramount? Many a result follows. All ultimately depends upon the idiosyncrasies and prepossessions of the individual in his group. But what ought to happen is a firmer grasp of what remains paramount, come what may—this, and a readiness to express and apply it afresh. Otherwise the mind will lose its balance between a nervous reactionary insistence upon maxims that once were timely and a convulsive readiness to make or to accept changes for the sake of change. In either case tradition becomes before long the shadow or echo of its former self. Its originality is compromised. Its vital function is impaired, even by those who pay nominal homage to what it represents in the religious community. There are quarters where respect for the antique may still linger, as a faint fragrance of the past clings to this or that trait of speech or dress in ecclesiastical procedure. Such survivals of the faith once delivered to the saints are ineffective, but they



are not harmful. A perfume from the sacred past is only a peril when it is offered as a power of life. What is really dangerous to spiritual health may be a subtle recourse to some substitute or alternative development, often in the shape of an abnormal feature like the false glamour that adheres to some stretches of tradition where Oriental notions of the holy man within the environment have infected the faith. As a stream pours along the main channel, at a sudden turn or bend of its course some pool of brackish water may be left on one side, sluggish and hardly rippled. Yet, although it lacks the sparkle of the river to which it owes its very existence, the backwater is not always dull. Occasionally the sunlight reaches it. Then the very ooze seems to sparkle. A phosphorescence gathers on the stagnant scum with more than natural brilliance. Rotting rubbish, slime, and dead leaves under water are at the bottom of a brightness on the surface; the glamour is due to corruption, not to vitality. So is it with certain phenomena of ecclesiastical tradition or sediment. However attractive to the eye, they form a deceptive by-product of what is real in the central flow of the stream. There is such a thing as the beauty of holiness. It is far more than a phrase. We have all seen practical illustrations of this indefinable quality; it is among the oldest traditions of our faith, and one of the surest proofs of the living Church. But never very far away from it, in the present as well as in the past, lie patches of the "religious" life where a cult of sanctity has been detached from integrity and intelligence alike, and where too often such a divorce is not simply tolerated but justified by some who ought to know better than to profane the term "saintly" by associating it with any sensational forms of private

emotion or sub-Christian devotion that chance to win local popularity. Yet still one reads guarded apologies for cults like that of the Holy Coat of Treves and of the Sacred Heart (which Unamuno feared would be fatal to any form of real Christianity); and, from gnostics of the second century to English Ranters of the seventeenth, one marks backwater after backwater of antinomianism, never so unpleasing as when it is covered with an iridescent film of pseudo-mysticism.

An insufficient respect for the past may develop an equally inadequate program, though of higher quality. Repeated efforts have been made to outline a better sequel to the Reformation; and some of the most popular prove to offer not so much a continuation of the true Reformation but an up-to-date transcript of the New Learning, for which Christ was not so much a living redeemer as the wisest of teachers, a divine guide, a sage of sages. Certainly this was an advance from the climate of opinion which we are accustomed to call mediaeval scholasticism, where the truth of belief about Christ was tested by its approximation to some authoritative body of doctrine. The scholars of the New Learning did make the New Testament a real book for the people as well as for experts. They brought the world a sight of the actual Jesus. But that vision by itself was seldom deep enough; the Christ whom even Erasmus in his best moments of insight realized was not a Lord to inspire saints and martyrs. What the New Learning contributed was indeed invaluable not only then but afterward, when a Protestant scholasticism put forward elaborate beliefs and dogmas about the person and work of the Lord in which the throb of direct fellowship was rarely to be felt. The Heidelberg

Catechism is a notable exception. At one period, after the Crusades, when wonder-working relics had been brought back from the Holy Land to enrich the shrines of Europe, some devout folk felt, as King Arthur's knight felt on entering King Pellam's chapel at Glastonbury, scarcely able to "spy Christ for saints" in a sanctuary adorned by

Rich arks with priceless bones of martyrdoms,  
Thorns of the crown and shivers of the cross.

A similar experience befell many when formulas replaced relics and saints. One of the factors which generally made for a revival of the genuine tradition among those who met any so-called apostolic church with the appeal "We would see Jesus," was the emphasis on His reality which the New Learning continued in various ways to make it possible for men to recover and restate. Yet how thin this contribution may be is shown by an analysis of Lessing's famous apostrophe to Luther in his *Parable*. "Luther! Thou hast freed us from the yoke of tradition; but who is to free us from the more intolerable yoke of the letter? Who will at last bring us a Christianity such as thou wouldest now teach us, such as Christ himself would teach?" By the letter he meant Scripture. Wearied by some of his Lutheran contemporaries and their biblical wrangling over doctrine, convinced as a historian that the early Church had not lived and moved by merely studying the books of the New Testament, he longed for what he believed to be a religion of love preached by Jesus in the gospels. To him, as a broadminded man of culture, this seemed plain and simple, whereas he looked round him to find that the Christian religion in these latter days of the eighteenth century had become identified with artificial

attempts to reproduce New Testament ideas and practices, or absorbed in scholastic, interminable debates over disputed interpretations of the canonical books. He longed for a new Luther to detach the living spirit of Christianity from the dead letter of the Bible and in this way to recover the real religion of the Master, which had existed before the New Testament was written and which was independent of documents. With an acuteness which embarrassed some biblicists of the time, he did present one or two items in the case for tradition as opposed to any isolation of the New Testament from the living stream of Christian thought and experience. His argument was not petulant. It was prompted by a genuine dislike for the rationalism which he detected even in some circles of biblical criticism. But his controlling desire appears to have been the rescue of Christianity from dogma altogether. When the positive content of any new matter which he assigned to tradition is analyzed,<sup>50</sup> the revised version turns out to be less than either the Roman or the reformed churches would have been prepared for a moment to accept. To all intents and purposes, whatever Lessing urged in order to score points against his critics, his solution was a dissolution. Practically it resolved itself into a distilled form of religion such as Tolstoy and others after him have in different ways offered as the water of life.

A century and a half later, between the cross winds of Newman and Strauss, the English poet Clough also lost touch with tradition, as he found himself unable to secure a footing for any intelligent faith in historical Christianity. In 1847 Professor Conington heard him speak at Oxford in support of a motion that the study of philos-

ophy was more important for the formation of opinion than the study of history. "What is it to me to know the fact of the battle of Marathon," the young poet asked, "or the fact of the existence of Cromwell?" He corrected himself by going on to explain, "I do not mean that it is of no importance to me that there should have been such a battle or such a person; but it is of no importance that I should know it." It is no such detached relation to history that underlies the Christian tradition. Clough could speak of the religious tradition; but that meant no more for him than a vague religiosity, which might be recognized in almost any great cult of the world. He had the impression that history, and especially the history of the Christian faith, was not certain enough to afford any basis for belief. Besides, such historical proof was superfluous, since moral instincts, enlightened public opinion, and the support of good, old associations amply sufficed.

Even then, as Clough spoke and wrote, Herman Melville in America turned from the seas of *Moby Dick* to the rough storms of theology. The minority who have read his poem of *Clarel* know how the hero took a more positive line, nearer to that of Lessing, when he claimed to possess

The heart to brave  
All questions on that primal ground  
Laid bare by faith's receding tide.

This was a strange anticipation. Already the cheering prospect of a brave new world was being held up by agnostics, although, to be sure, most of them disdained the primal ground to which Lessing believed that he still clung. But it is on the rock of ages that the Christian tra-

dition sees the foundation of any new order that will answer the questions of a day to come. No other foothold avails.

## III

There is hardly any occasion when a sane mind feels graver apprehensions about the future than while living between shortcomings of the past, which some still do their best—a hopeless best—to ignore or to palliate, and ongoings of the present in which pioneers often kick up the dust of self-importance as they scurry here and there to improvise a better order of things than the sorry scheme that has fallen to them and theirs. In the course of events men come to a point at which something has to be ended or amended. The scale may be great or small. The issues involved may be at first provincial or personal, though they raise interests that affect wide circles and the fortunes of a vital cause in the world of faith or freedom. Indeed one can never be certain into what private bay the tidal wave of change may not eventually penetrate. Not even the keenest spirit in stirring up or in supporting a reform is able to foresee its consequences. But of one thing we may be reasonably sure. In an hour when revolutionaries and reactionaries are pressing their half-truths, while the decision we have to make may require special wisdom such as an emergency alone supplies, that special wisdom is most likely to be bestowed upon a mind which has trained itself already to the double fear of its vision being obscured by subtle films of custom or dazzled by any flash of impatient zeal. This is the climate of opinion in which right judgment has a chance to thrive, flowering with courage and prudence. And its cultivation requires as

much attention to the latter risk of overprizing "now" at the expense of "then" as to the opposite tendency.

What, it may be asked, is the use of recalling these well-known data of experience? Are such general principles of any use in an emergency, when the trial of change befalls the human mind and when the emergency itself brings insight? There is a twofold reason. For one thing, they remind us that much of our success in such moments depends upon where we are. As half the power of temptation lies in the atmosphere in which it finds us, weakened and off our guard by some moral or mental unfaithfulness, so the sustaining powers of life are bound up with the ability to see ourselves properly. Nothing is a truism that serves to bring this home to the mind. It is a great help to know how we have come to our present position, for example. Wordsworth speaks with indignant pity of the man who in a passing trouble never falls back upon his past, to recall what lies under the surface. How can he cope with the situation? Such a creature is not a man at all. He is

A thoughtless thing! who once unblest,  
Does little on his memory rest.

The one rescue from panic and misjudgment is reflection on what one has already undergone or has been brought up to do. And, for another thing, those are most likely to think hopefully and frankly about the future who face it in the position of loyalty. Tradition is no peripheral interest but a central factor in self-command, in the power of weighing a difficult situation, or in meeting a new demand for faithfulness. It is by training ourselves to be sensitive to such considerations that we learn not to be

carried off our feet when vitally important decisions have to be made or worked out. General ideas, therefore, about the validity of memory and tradition have this value: they are the fuel of the mind, so well laid that a spark may be enough to kindle them at the proper moment. Those who rise to some new occasion, instead of swerving or retreating, owe much to the atmosphere in which they have chosen to live and move. Thoughtfulness, prayerfulness, and faithfulness in lesser matters augment the personality and provide it with that coherence which is a requisite of faith under a sudden strain.

All this belongs to the "paradosis" or living school of the Church. A teaching Church trains its members as they enter into the responsibilities as well as the privileges of their place in the fellowship, learning to think and pray for another. The function of the Word, with the sacraments, is one of the forces that build up the living tradition into real power. Thus, when the hour for decisive action strikes on the dial of life, men and women are most likely to be well prepared if they have already spent quieter hours in considering and exercising the duties of their vocation. Besides, a crisis may be sprung upon a generation today much more suddenly than used to be the case. The spread of information has accelerated the process of diffusing new ideas. What formerly took months or years to reach the mind of the public, now, in our age of quick communication, precipitates changes in tradition, as individuals or active minorities multiply propaganda. All the more need, therefore, to have the mind ready and steady for the duty of molding public opinion or, if need be, of opposing it.



## IV

Strictly speaking, we cannot separate life into compartments like the past, the present, and the future. They are not disconnected phases, not even for one who may have passed through such dramatic changes that sometimes he can hardly recognize himself on the other side of the crisis. The past has entered into the present, and to some degree the future is already being shaped by what goes on in the present. Yet this has to be said: although in both of these cases most people are generally unconscious that their impulses and tendencies involve any such nexus, progress is retarded unless we become sensible of the nexus by exercising reflection and imagination; the difference is that in the second case we cannot forecast, except to a limited degree, the probable consequences of our actions and decisions, whereas in the former case—that is, of “then” and “now”—we ought to be more aware than we usually care to be of our debt, for better or for worse, to what lies behind us in time.

One facet of the latter truth, on its grateful side, is illustrated by some lines in the hundred and eleventh section of *In Memoriam*. “The churl in spirit,” Tennyson writes, is to be found in all ranks of life, “up and down.” A man may be “by blood a king, at heart a clown.” Even an aristocrat may be a boor or worse, and what that worse is the poet now proceeds to explain. “The churl in spirit”

Will let his coltish nature break  
At seasons through the gilded pale;  
For who can always act? save he  
To whom a thousand memories call.

The contrast is not between acting and talking, much less between the upper and the lower classes. In spite of Tennyson's protest in the context, the lines sound like an expression of *noblesse oblige*; the true gentleman should be so bound by the invisible ties and traditions of honor, in which he has been reared, that he will not give way or break down in an emergency. His rank lays obligations and responsibilities of courtesy, courage, and chivalry upon him. He is the *honnête homme* of French ethics, the sort of well-born man for whom Pascal wrote his three *Discours sur la condition des grandes*; his strength is to be conscious of the rank and social order into which he has been born—though, as Pascal does not forget to remind him, the least in the order of divine grace is greater than he is. Yet the English poet really has no such class distinction in mind. He is depicting a nature that will always act, that is, always play its part by remaining true to itself, as that self has been well trained. Seasons may come when others feel free to break loose into self-indulgence at the call of the moment's threat or pleasure. Not so the genuine spirit, who is rallied and steadied by some recollection of what he owes to his upbringing. Supported or unsupported, in any circumstances he will play his part unmoved by any gust of passion. Such integrity is no prerogative of noble birth. No one class, no one sex, has a monopoly of it. Thus George Eliot noted it in the English country girl, Maggie Tulliver, who refused to gratify a passion of the passing hour because she would not be unfaithful to those who had reared her. She would not do anything short of what they had the right to expect from her. "If the past is not to bind us, where can our duty lie? We should have no law but the inclination of the mo-

ment," and to that fascinating lawlessness she declined to yield; she would continue to act up to the sacred associations which gather round every profound experience of the human soul in bygone days. Another example, from a more tragic angle, occurs in Sir Alfred Lyall's lines on "Theology in Extremis." Here we have the monologue of an Englishman, captured by Muslims in India during the mutiny, who has life contemptuously offered to himself and his company if they will consent to abjure their faith for the faith of the Prophet. He thought it over grimly and steadily, then decided to die rather than take life and freedom on such terms. And he died, not because he was a Christian (he was an agnostic) but because in the last resort he felt that what his fathers would have faced for their faith he could do no less than face for their sake, as well as, he admitted, "for the honor of the English race"—"just for the pride of the old countree." The call of the old memories was not in vain. Only a single member of the English group cared to save himself by calling on the Prophet, and he was a half-caste.

The occasion may be prosaic or heroic, but the power of the past in real tradition is the same. When fear or selfishness prompts life to cut free from responsibilities at any season, when the clouds return after the rain, when ingratitude or prolonged strain or loneliness allures people to think of nothing but themselves—whatever happens to make men and women petulantly decline to carry on, or to consider anything outside their own immediate interests—then the "thousand memories" intervene to rally the mind by setting life in its true perspective. The "thousand" is a poet's license. Often one or two suffice, as in the effective legend, preserved by the Talmud, that

when Joseph was at the supreme moment of temptation in the house of Potiphar suddenly he seemed to see in a vision his mother and his old father watching their son. That was enough to recall him to his senses.

It is a source and resource of moral integrity to cherish these high traditions of yesterday. Such memories are "hiding places of man's power," as Wordsworth protests in early middle age. So

I would give, as far as words can give,  
Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining,  
Such is my hope, the spirit of the past  
For future restoration.

When periods of dry reaction arrive, the soul can fall back upon these secret aids of genuine memory. "Now" may be less exhilarating than "then" used to be. Perhaps; but this may be merely a case of the vital sap retiring to the root, until the winter of uncongenial circumstances is over. If the indifference is not due to personal carelessness about the tradition, but to circumstances over which we have no control, we may confidently expect that deeply cherished recollections will sooner or later end in a period of restoration, when tradition is again numbered among the effectives of life. Old impressions and convictions once more become invested with new warmth and value, if a man recollects with whom he once lived and by whom he once was trusted.

Hand, you have held true fellows' hands.  
Be clean then, not before you do  
A thing they'd not believe of you.

Thus tradition rallies honor.

The reader of seventeenth-century literature is almost

surprised to come across this truth where he does not expect it, in one of Samuel Daniel's graceful little poems, a dialogue between Ulysses and the siren. Why not settle down and enjoy yourself here, the siren pleads, instead of wandering about the world to fight for other folk? Here you may be free, instead of being bound to a mere convention of honor and chivalry imposed by custom, which "makes us many other laws than mere nature did." But Ulysses will not accept this seductive view of life. Noble natures, he insists, do not shrink from toil and danger. What would become of the world, if no one felt in duty bound to challenge iniquities and abuses that go on under a wicked peace? Besides, this so-called convention is neither unnatural nor outworn; it is an inspiration for high-minded men, who "with the thought of actions past are re-created still." When they are tempted to be tired of loyalty, one source of fresh energy is to be found in recollecting their inherited traditions of yesterday. According to the poet, the siren yields to the argument of the hero. So it ought to be in life, Daniel implies. No freedom is to be sought or found in gratifying self for the moment, and the call of the past, with its standards of the family or the community, proves to be a stirring factor, not a "recreation" but a re-creation, especially when disillusionment or exhaustion suggests that life in pursuit of ideals has no further powers of renewal.

## V

The realization of value in what lies behind us has a similar value for a due appreciation of the Word. Here also we discover that tradition does for religion what it

does for art and literature. It was Hazlitt the radical in politics, Hazlitt the sturdiest of individualists, who once declared, "My enthusiasm glows the brighter and steadier for being kindled at a common flame and at an ancient and hallowed shrine." He was speaking of the admiration felt for great painters. His point was that modern admiration for a genius like Raphael was partly sustained by the fact that the artist's reputation had survived centuries of change, with all their "waves of opinion and the wrecks of time." Today the individual's appreciation of Raphael's cartoons and pictures is confirmed by the testimony of the ages, he argued, so that "the grandeur is not merely in the cause or object but in the effect." The same holds true of the Bible as of many other classics in prose and verse. These works indeed speak directly to the individual in each generation. They interest him as interpretations of actual life still, not simply as historical records from a remote past. Many a passage uplifts him, enlarges his mind, and touches him to the quick. Even his own experience, as Newman put it in a famous passage, enables him to see more in certain lines of Homer, Horace, and Vergil than he did as a boy. But, in addition to that, the classic masterpieces are vitally enriched in the course of the centuries through which they come to find us. For, as one scholar reminds us, "they come to us now not only with their original and essential virtue, against which time is powerless, but with the accumulated associations of all the ages through which they have passed. They are not wholly new, even when we come upon them for the first time, because much of their content has been unconsciously inherited by us, or has reached us indirectly through intermediate channels. It is no paradox to say

that they may actually mean more to each successive generation." <sup>51</sup>

It is all very well for Plato to describe a book as a poor, forlorn orphan, unable to speak for itself or to answer the questions of a later generation, but we should never have had access to the philosopher's wisdom had he not himself conveyed it through the written word. Thought is commonly embodied in language, spoken or written. Artists and more than artists, despite Plato's disparagement of art, will rightly contend that the range of expression for ideas includes the aesthetic as well as the literary medium. Surely painting, music, and sculpture bring truth home to the mind. Is there not a place for symbolism, especially in the sphere of religion? Still, when all is said and done, speech is central, and speech as a record of intercourse, in the sacred books of the world. The gospel traditions embody the talk of Jesus. The very epistles imply personal relations; Dryden's phrase for them, the "absent sermons" of the apostles, is not pointless. In one respect this feature is more characteristic of the Christian Book than of the Quran. In the latter there is indeed intercourse between the Prophet and Gabriel, but the stress falls on the angel's answers. There is more real dialogue, implicit and explicit, in the New Testament, where communities and individual members are overheard speaking to their Lord and of their Lord, or listening to Him.

Prophetic religion, as, for example, it reappears at the core of the primitive Christian mission, differs from mysticism in this, that here again we meet revelation as a "communication of the divine will which is universally binding," transmitted through specially gifted personali-

ties at a crucial point of history.<sup>52</sup> The age to come had begun with the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The powers of this world to come, under the Spirit, inspired the apostolic preaching and testimony with authority. For "through the creative experiences of prophets" in the Hebrew past, as we know, "God makes known His will; through their lips He 'speaks'; their word is therefore binding on their contemporaries and on posterity," to which their messages ultimately pass in written record. So, in their wake, the apostles embody an authoritative tradition which is not the same as a mystic's reverence for high souls with whom he feels affinity; nor is it the same as any mere assent to ecclesiastical decisions of an organized institution, on the other hand. The thrill of tradition is therefore not lost when that classical testimony or tradition is enshrined in scriptures read by the worshiping community, provided that the sacred Book is not allowed to become merely a record of the past or a source of proof texts for subsequent dogma. Treat Scripture as if it were a collection of literary souvenirs or a catena of precedents for Church decrees, and the method fails to preserve the authentic role of the Word as fatally as any purely mystical or allegorical interpretation. The power of appreciating the gospel testimony lies with those who are able and willing to reach back into the living past in order to secure some fresh applications of the text for today. Pawns on the chessboard are more numerous than any other figures in action, and they never move except in a forward direction. Yet they do not decide the issue. They are of less importance than the figures that are free to move backward as well as sideways, if need be.



## VI

It is in view of all this that the historical sense becomes so vitally important for the faith. Advocates of a new move may in their haste ignore the past unduly, instead of realizing that to take account of it is never more needful than in prospect of a decisive turning. Then if ever, as the old and the new appear to clash, half of the wisdom required by courage lies in the sense that life is a going concern, with an urge or drive from the past behind the present situation of change. "Arise, shine, for thy light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Every year marked A.D. in the Christian calendar has deepened the significance of these words from a B.C. century. The light that brings Christians to their feet is a light for them to receive and transmit, not a flash of their own insight, though it demands receptive thought. Any fresh disclosure of the Lord's purpose implies an impetus which goes back to yesterday; and those who are called upon to re-form the faith of ages have succeeded in proportion to their consciousness of this, just as their failures to carry out a high aim with effect and full appeal are generally due to a hasty disregard of some older values in the heritage of beliefs and practices which they sought to make freshly vital. To be thoroughgoing at a period of crisis means everything. But it is a virtue which means more than a removal of abuses. It includes a thoroughgoing survey of the situation in the light of its past no less than a vision of its better future. Otherwise reform is apt to be unduly negative and outward. Besides, the forward movement may drop what has afterward to be picked up again, and seldom without difficulty. Some

of these omissions may have been almost inevitable as temporary measures of precaution, but this does not account for all. The fundamental cause of such mistakes is an indifference to history, which dims "the glory of the Lord" but fortunately is not beyond repentance. No such indifference is ever sublime. A knowledge of perspective is as needful to art as a knowledge of anatomy, and the historical sense has a function in the religion of Christian experience which is not less vital than spiritual intuition.

The historical sense is more than the flair of an antiquarian. It does not assume that the full meaning of an event or of an utterance in literature is disclosed at the time it first occurred. The significance of the greater events and records is far from being exhausted by what contemporaries saw in them. After the event happened, and because it happened as it did, more becomes visible in it, since there is a spiritual order of continuity to which the occurrence belongs. The historical sense shows how the 'vital principle of identity may be traced in its successive stages. But, in the interests of reality, it insists that the actual data of what happened must be given their full value for the past, before attempts are made to read into them or out of them larger lessons for posterity. Often this produces tension. Yet it is essential to be thus historically minded, provided that this method implies, not a stop being put to advance at some remote period of the past, but a recognition that some action of God is celebrated which is both in and above history. Such a recognition implies a community in which each generation receives a testimony to the living Lord, and transmits it to the next with a new accent of experience.

No better illustration of this truth, as of most religious

truths, is to be found than in the praise of the Church. There deep convictions are to be overheard with simplicity and power. On public and personal occasions of profound feeling, the Scottish Church prays:

God of our fathers, be the God  
Of their succeeding race.

English-speaking Christians of all churches have also their great hymn at similar moments:

O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come.

Both of these supreme lyrics of devotion are based on passages from the Old Testament. Doddridge and Watts alike derive their inspiration from the same Hebrew faith in tradition. It is not surprising to find that the first serious treatise on tradition since Tertullian's brilliant, perverse pages *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* opens with a stanza from the Latin version of Deuteronomy (xxxii.7):

Ask your fathers and they will tell you,  
your elders, and they will inform you.

So Vincent of Lerins began his *Commonitorium*. It was the faith that had moved the author of the seventy-eighth psalm to compose his hymn "on the deep lessons of the past,

That we know as we have heard,  
that our fathers told to us,  
hiding it not from their children,  
but telling the next generation  
the Lord's praise and power,  
the wonders he has done.

He set up his witness in Jacob,  
he appointed a law within Israel,  
bidding our fathers instruct their children,  
that the next generation might understand,  
that children yet unborn might rise  
and tell their children after them,  
to put their confidence in God,  
and not forget the deeds of God  
but loyally obey him."

Such is the historic sense at its best, finding in the remote past many a fresh meaning for the present, and finding it naturally, as one generation in its households continues to pass the faith on to the next.

Handel's angels in the chorus were both "bright and fair," but metaphors taken over from physics or metaphysics for the interpretation of history are rarely more than one or the other; generally they are picturesque at the expense of accuracy, fascinating rather than faithful. Similes are apt to prove dangerous allies, though naturally their influence in the direction of false analogy is not often so insidious. Yet one illustration is not unfair. When any passage from "then" to "now" and from "now" into the next phase of the future is managed without serious loss, the inner story of the movement will probably record something like what used to happen, indeed what may still happen, in Eastern lands to a party of travelers making their way across a strange, difficult tract of country. It is with genuine tradition in the religious sphere as it is with the methods of a skilled guide or dragoman who leads the wayfarers forward to their goal. He has the journey's end clearly in his mind's eye. He knows the destination of the march. But he knows something else, which is as important. Now and then, especially as the

shadows begin to darken, till even familiar prospects look unfamiliar, there is a risk of plunging into what may prove to be a cul-de-sac or of swerving along some unsuspected bypath. Some of the pilgrims demand instant advance, at any hazard. They want a short cut if possible, and, at any rate, no halt. But he understands when he had better pause for a few minutes before taking the next step, in order to verify the landmarks of the route. He may stop; he may actually step back for a few paces to some rising ground, only to see more distinctly the direction where the safe path for the company lies ahead. Happy is the company which has even one such leader among them, and which is prepared to trust his wisdom at a critical moment. Happier still is the man who, in such a responsible position, will not allow himself to be rushed or hurried; he knows from experience how guidance is likely to be gained, by a timely recollection of the past, and he has the moral courage to act upon this instinct, even at the risk of being misunderstood in some quarters for the time being. Such a character represents the wise believer in progress or in any forward movement that is not to fail—

The echoes of the past within his brain,  
The sunrise of the future on his face.

Are the prospects of the Christian cause ever more hopeful than when the future is thus being faced in the light of experience and under the impetus of the living past?

## VII

To all this, however, there is a background of awe, apart from which any sketch of tradition's thrill would

be untrue to the facts of life. None of the closer ties which human beings form or inherit yields joy without responsibilities, and every one of these ties will be certain to avenge itself upon the thoughtless mind and the careless heart. Once self is allowed to occupy the center, efficiency becomes impaired before long and happiness dries up. Whatever be the sphere, the dread of this cannot be far away from those who take their relationships with any seriousness. They know too well, from history and observation, what happens when a union comes to be a formality for the most part; as responsibility to or for others is allowed to die away, the heart of the relationship is vitally affected. This is a commonplace of ethics. It applies to marriage, the family, or devotion to a common cause. When the main thought is one of personal profit or credit, "What can I get out of this?" instead of "What can I put into it?" the vital pulse begins to throb fitfully. This commonplace, however, is too commonly forgotten or evaded in the Church of God, where of all places it ought to be a tenet of tenets. As Christians realize the thrill that the distinctive tradition of truth in love has for the household of the faith, as they become at all sensible of the debt they owe to it for their very being no less than for their well-being, surely they must be haunted by a fear of permitting life on any pretext and at any turn to slip out of touch with this main current of the Spirit which flows, as it has always flowed, directly from the Word. There is such a thing as God withdrawing His confidence from us. We make so sure of His mercy and forbearance. We seek and think we find a sense of security in membership of His community. Yet those inside His fellowship who are alive to the

deep meaning of His holiness know at times the need for praying with the psalmist, "Cast me not from thy presence, and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of thy salvation." And in the New Testament the first of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is love. To evade this test and condition of the living tradition is to expose oneself to exclusion from His presence as useless matter for His purposes. "If ye keep my commandment to love one another, as I have loved you, ye shall abide in my love. And if a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered." These are the stern terms on which fellowship is enjoyed. It is fatal to suppose that the Lord becomes a reality for us if we avoid or neglect the personal relationship between ourselves and others, where He has chosen to reveal His heart and mind. Unless we share His interests, what interest can we expect Him to take in us? We are outsiders. We have made ourselves strangers to His presence.

Long ago this inner truth of the Christian tradition was sounded in the rare ("rare," alas, in a double sense) declaration by Clement of Alexandria in the *Stromata* (vii.10) about the real Christian knowledge which, "handed down by tradition, through the grace of God, is entrusted as a sort of deposit to those who prove themselves worthy of the teaching; and from this teaching the quality of love shines out in ever-increasing light." It is one of the utterances that make one regret, with Newman and Von Hügel, that Clement is not an official saint of the Church, for this note is not too often struck in the ante-Nicene or even in the Nicene discussions of tradition. Even in a context tinged with intellectualism, as here, Clement manages to lay clear emphasis on active

beneficence or love to man as well as to God, teaching, in line with the New Testament, that an unerring Church must be marked by this supreme quality of the higher life—generosity, self-sacrifice, charity, and all manner of cheerful, practical service to one's fellows. Unless this marks the fellowship, its very worship damages and weakens character. "You come together, not for the better but for the worse," St. Paul told his Corinthians, who took more interest in cliques than in charity. Their devotional practices fostered class feeling, instead of lifting them above self-consciousness, and thus lowered the tone of the gathering; the local communion service itself had been allowed to furnish an opportunity for class feeling.

In these latter days "symbiosis," almost as unbeautiful a word as altruism, has been revived for the vocabulary of communal ethics, to signify the art or technique of living together on certain social levels. If there is a Christian form of symbiosis, the warm atmosphere of its fellowship may breed not merely fruits of the Spirit but some ugly growths, fungi of the soil. One of these is described in Browning's *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*. This is not a dramatic lyric of how people quarreled in Spain. It shows a poisonous weed of hate ripening on the soil of professional Christian love.

If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,  
God's blood, would not mine kill you!

Here is one monk muttering to himself about another inside a close brotherhood, knit by sacred vows and traditions of a great order. His sole thought is how to get his fellow damned to all eternity. "My heart's abhorrence!"—that "swine" of a gardener!



When he finishes refection,  
Knife and fork he never lays  
Cross-wise, to my recollection,  
As I do, in Jesu's praise.

How can I contrive to make him guilty of some equally mortal sin on his deathbed, and so "send him flying off to hell"?

Then there is the prose record of a nonconformist in England, Bunyan's *Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, a realistic novel in the form of a dialogue. Bunyan sketches the career of a middle-class tradesman, a dishonest, unscrupulous character who managed to prosper in business. Unlike Falstaff, he did not forget what the inside of a church was like. Brought up in a godly home, he met and worked for religious people, married one good wife after another, and belonged to a dissenting conventicle. The rascal attended worship, though he generally slept or misbehaved. With local religious tradition he kept in close touch, for business purposes and for the sake of respectability, though it was merely with the forms of it. And at the end, as his friends expected to see him suffering agonies of remorse, Mr. Badman "died like a lamb, quietly and without fear." It is a stroke of Bunyan's genius. The man had lost the power of being thrilled by any sharp experience of life; he had sinned away the capacity of being afraid, and so died without a pang. To Bunyan that appeared more awful than any horrible hours of remorse on a deathbed, such as conventional biographers would have depicted in lurid language.

These are two silhouettes of extreme cases. We are more familiar with gray etchings of the same character shading off into various degrees of conditional and casual

deference to the exterior of the Christian tradition, as the pulse of loyalty becomes irregular, either because worship turns into a repetition of soporific mantras or because the very love for God is made of none effect by uncharitable dogmatism, thinly disguised selfishness, or love of the present world. What happens to people, individuals or churches, who go on living for ends of their own, when they nominally belong to a fellowship where tradition requires concern for the genuine interests of one another, for consideration, brotherliness, kindness, justice, and self-sacrifice? Well, the tradition suffers; and so does the life that is unfaithful to its principles. Those who bring discredit on the tradition pass from life to death before they die, and it makes no difference whether extreme unction awaits the dying or not. In the first sentence of Jesus on earth, men heard Him say, "Repent, and believe the gospel." But on the closing pages of the New Testament we find a message to one of the oldest churches: "Repent, and do the first works, or else . . ." Repent of having offended God by failing to live up to what the gospel involves. The church of Ephesus was the chief center of the faith in the diocese or circuit, honored for its zeal, its orthodoxy, and its power of endurance. Yet it had left its "first love," its original brotherly spirit. The vital essence of the faith had almost evaporated in the heat of controversy; under the very strain of loyalty the community was slipping into censoriousness, impatience, and irritable feuds, so much so that the alternative now was either extinction or the heart-searching that leads men to forsake their foolish ways for "the wisdom that is from above, which is first of all pure, then peaceable, forbearing, conciliatory, full of

mercy." From the outset it has been characteristic of the Christian tradition that the real presence of the Lord is revealed to His people as their lives touch the needs of others, and nothing is more likely to be a deadly sin than to remain aloof, indifferent, or inhumane under the guise of correct belief.

The religious world is as beset by worldliness as what orthodox and devout persons call "the world" itself. The spirit of the world, William Law notes in *The Spirit of Prayer*, "is as worldly when it gives alms or prays in the church as when it bargains in the market." "None so orthodox as your unmitigated worldling," Thomas Hardy once sneered, not quite unfairly. There are varieties of religious and of irreligious worldliness, but on any analysis most of them betray a common feature. Whatever people of this temper may profess to believe or disbelieve, they behave as though the present counts for more than the past or the future. Whether such a course of action proves to be vicious or respectable is a secondary affair, except for the moral code of the period. The fundamental feature of this attitude is that all sense of obligation tends to be lost with the lack of outlook. Once men and women are content to become isolated from the deep influences of yesterday and of tomorrow, they are in danger of being reduced to the level of the artificial and the superficial. It is assumed that no one need be expected to owe anything to anyone else, should that happen to interfere with his private wishes at the moment or unless it chances to further his particular ends. In some quarters this position is openly hailed as right and natural, and these quarters may include the religious sphere. Self-interest in subtle forms makes its appeal

even there. But, enlightened or unabashed, it is a disorder of life which lowers and disintegrates the human self.

The methods of recovery are as manifold as the disease. Now and then the old no less than the young have to be forced out of it by the family or the State. Others are shamed out of it. A few will always argue themselves into health by a vision of broader horizons; if they are not prepared any longer to view individual life as a parenthesis between two eternities, they object to theories that take it as an interval between two casual accidents, and proceed to construct a middle way. On such a path wayfarers are sometimes promised a refreshing river of scientific humanism. Normally, however, for the large majority of us ordinary folk the waters of Israel are better than all the rivers of Damascus. We have access, as our fathers had and as our descendants will have in years ahead, to the living tradition that flows within reach of the humblest on earth. Here is the stream that renews the face of life under the withering touch of worldliness. Anybody who knows the inside of real Christianity, at any point of contact, soon becomes aware that the saving sense of obligation has no more telling sanction and support than what is furnished by the habit of identifying ourselves actively with the Church of the dead, the living, and those yet unborn, for there, as nowhere else, do we learn what we owe to God and to one another. Much indeed depends on the Word being taught and preached effectively and the sacraments administered duly, as well as on vocations, missions, and services being provided for men and women of various aptitudes. But, with worship vital and fellowship real, here is the central opportunity of mastering the great

lesson. No other relationship moves so many of all sorts and conditions to walk humbly with God and to work wisely for and with their fellows. There are places and there are customs where the past and the present join hands. In Christendom this is experienced particularly by those who belong to the fellowship and worship of the Church, when it is more than membership in a sectarian religious club; for there, as the faithful say their prayers together, they renew their strength to meet the future undismayed, and find that they can do more than they or others ever thought they could—all because behind them lies a tradition which they know they were not clever enough to make, and which they are persuaded no combination of circumstances will be able to break.

Such an experience is not always vocal. As in human life many a throb of anxiety, fear, or pain is felt which does not break into open expression, so the thrill of tradition in any form of courage, hope, or relief may never pass beyond a more or less secret consciousness on the part of those who belong to the great fellowship. Much depends on temperament. Many who are deeply moved by loyalty will speak of it less often and less ardently than some at their side. In every congregation of the faithful those who believe are surrounded by a larger number who believe that they believe. Generally a minority carries forward the cause of tradition; in the wake of their convictions the rest follow, stirred by their lead and example. Again, the range of the experience is wide and varied. In humble chapels and meeting-houses over the countryside, the faith and knowledge of Christianity have often been kept alive as truly as in great cathedrals. It is heartening to have the privilege

of joining for a time in the worship of such small groups, with their local usages and traditions of praise and prayer; for there the continuity of the real catholic tradition is verified, although most of the members would shrink from what is supposed to be meant by "catholic." Nevertheless, direct or indirect, vocal or quiet, the thrill of tradition continues to move people inside the fellowship, be it provincial or national.

The evidence for this testimony in favor of Church membership is more weighty, though perhaps less obvious at first, than what seems to contradict the claim. The counterplea is not to be shirked. But, as the reasons of some for joining or supporting the Church are not always of the highest order, so the motives of others for declining its services and service are not invariably an expression of patronizing superiority. Contempt or indifference may be at the back of it. Yet if on the part of many there is an attitude of no more than detached sympathy with the Christian fellowship, this is far from being unintelligible; it may well be (although it is far from well) because they find it hard to believe that the Church is teaching or is capable of teaching so deep a lesson. Now and then we meet honest outsiders who frankly retort that the Church of today is not unworldly enough, or that it is unworldly in a negative, narrow sense of the word. Such criticisms must be laid to heart by Christians who would be equally honest about themselves. Nevertheless it may be modestly but firmly urged that inside the relationship of Church fellowship, for all its failures and shortcomings, thousands upon thousands are still free to confess, "We are saved from ourselves." And they are saved from the sick self through the open

confession of faith that admits them to an intercourse of one soul with another and of all souls with God, rousing in some measure a common desire to understand His mind for us and ours and all men, as that mind has been and is to be. This means, if it means anything at all, a cause requiring more than solitaries for its service. For some natures such a choice or surrender proves a glad recovery of strength. There is more than an autobiographical touch in the second sentence of the following passage from *A Candid Examination of Theism*, written half a century ago by G. J. Romanes, the distinguished scientist, as he regained his Christian faith under the influence of bishop Gore. Having occasion to speak of "the happiness of religious—and clearly of the highest religious i.e. Christian—belief," he at once added, "It is a matter of fact that besides being most intense, it is most enduring, growing, and never staled by custom. Those who have it usually testify to what they used to be without it." This is an experience fairly common in some measure. A new power is released or recovered for life, which is more than a passing spurt. The belief that leads to the joining of hearts and hands in the Christian fellowship proves a relief that lasts. Before long it passes into a positive thrill and uplift for those who respond to a touch that has "still its ancient power" of healing any who are unreluctant to be purged from the individualism that endangers even the religious life, and who are ready to share, side by side with others, the privileges and responsibilities, the interests and experiences, of a living tradition which has behind it a long past and before it a long, long future. Those who worship God in spirit and in truth come to know this instinctively. At present they

may know it only in part; but already most are beginning to realize how it means everything for them here and now to let themselves be inspired by loyalty to the Lord's own fellowship, and the more consciously the better.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The wording of *Theatetus* (198: Καλούμεν γε παραδιδόντα μὲν διδάσκειν, παραλαμβάνοντα δὲ μανθάνειν) recalls 1 Cor. xi. 23 (ἐγὼ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου ὃ καὶ παρέδωκα ὑμῖν) and xi. 2 (καθὼς παρέδωκα ὑμῖν τὰς παραδόσεις κατέχετε). But Plato's διδασκαλία καὶ παράδοσις (*Leg.* 803) means the oral teaching and exposition of a subject, neither a writing nor the transmission of information for the benefit of posterity. Quintilian, a younger contemporary of St. Paul, could speak of "traditio" as written exposition (*Instit. Orat.* i. 3), and by the time of Josephus the Greek term "paradosis" had come to include a historical record (*Apion.* i. i. 9); the verb in Luke's preface (καθὼς παρέδωκαν ἡμῖν οἱ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται καὶ ὑπηρέται γενόμενοι τοῦ λόγου) does not rule out written sources, but the oral associations of the noun as well as of the verb predominate in primitive Christian usage, as for example, in the rare allusions provided by apostolic fathers like Clem. Rom. vii. 2 and li. 2, Polycarp *Ad. Phil.* vii. 2, and Diognetus xi. 6 ("the faith of the gospel and the tradition of the apostles").

<sup>2</sup> Professor John Burnet in *Early Greek Philosophy* (i, pp. 220 f.). See further Jowett's introduction to his version of the *Phaedrus* (pp. 419 f.), with the valuable fifth and eighth chapters in Paul Friedlaender's *Platon: Eidos, Paideia, Dialogos* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1928).

<sup>3</sup> In *Plato and Platonism* (p. 129). He explains this by pointing out that for Plato "all knowledge was like knowing a person," a slow, comprehensive sense of the subject in its varied modes of self-expression.

<sup>4</sup> Παράδοσις for Chrysippus (quoted by Plutarch in *De Stoic. Repugn.* ix. 1035) meant discourses or discussions, not traditions. The Epictetus passage is in ii. 23. 40: διὰ λόγου καὶ τοιαύτης παραδόσεως ἐλθεῖν ἐπὶ τὸ τέλειον δεῖ . . . ἀνάγκη δὲ τὴν παράδοσιν

γένεσθαι τῶν θεωρημάτων καὶ μετὰ τινος ποικιλίας καὶ δριμύτητος. He dryly adds (ii. 25. 29) that a speaker depends a good deal upon his audience; "if you want to hear a philosopher, show yourself ready to hear, and you will see how that rouses him to speak." It is a reminder which might be profitably picked up by unphilosophic persons in our Christendom, who sometimes bewail the lack of any throb in their church services; they seem to forget that a listless congregation may be the cause as well as the consequence of dull preaching.

<sup>5</sup> The use of the tradition verb (i. 8: τὴν ἐντρέχειαν τὴν περὶ τὸ παραδίδόναι τὰ θεωρήματα) shows that to "expound" is more central here than to "hand down" some tradition. So in the Wisdom of Solomon (xiv. 15), where the Alexandrian Jew, though confused about the origin of idolatry, is clear on the two stages of any such cult; first the originator "imparted [παρέδωκεν] mysteries and rites to his subjects," and then, "in course of time, as the godless custom prevailed it was kept as a law." Here again the Greek verb suggests initiative and even authority ("enjoined upon" or "delivered"), as the Vulgate "constituit" implies; it does not mean "handed down," any more than in the remark of Epictetus (ii. 14. 2) that "when an art is being taught [παραδίδωται], it is tiresome to an outsider who is unacquainted with it."

<sup>6</sup> The soil and background of this composite movement reflected in Col. ii. 8 f. are surveyed by Dr. W. L. Knox in *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* (pp. 149-178). The sequence of thanksgiving after revelation, as paralleled in the Poimandres, is a minor proof that "currents of Jewish thought, having their source in the Old Testament, were running in the same channels with currents of non-Jewish religious thought" (C. H. Dodd in *The Bible and the Greeks*, pp. 175 f.), and that in more than ethical or moral directions. How closely "the word of Christ" approximates to what the apostle elsewhere calls the Spirit is indicated by his solitary use of the latter term in this epistle (i. 5-8), where "in the word of the truth of the gospel" covers what is presently meant by "in the Spirit."

<sup>7</sup> In Seneca's *Epist. Morales* (xc. 3-6). The problem of unwritten law at this period is discussed in Rudolf Hirzel's *Themis, Dike und Verwandtes* (pp. 23 f., 43 f., 259 f., 343 f., 372 f.) and

Auguste Bill's *La Morale et La Loi dans la Philosophie Antique* (pp. 17 f., 36 f., 158 f., 183 f.).

<sup>8</sup> The Russian sect of the Dukhobors, who rose at the end of the eighteenth century, disparaged the Bible as written in dead letters, and embodied their tenets in the oral tradition of "The Living Book," which for generations fathers passed on to their children (F. C. Conybeare, *Russian Dissenters*, p. 273). The vogue of oral tradition throughout Europe, India, Polynesia, and elsewhere, preserving not merely religious data but sagas or prose narratives as well as poetry, is richly discussed by H. M. and N. K. Chadwick in their three volumes on *The Growth of Literature* (Cambridge, 1932-1940).

<sup>9</sup> The earliest record, discovered by Dean Armitage Robinson in a British Museum Latin manuscript, is printed by him, with an English rendering, in the *Cambridge Texts and Studies* (i. 2, pp. 112-116), and reprinted in the third edition of Knopf and Krüger's *Ausgewählte Martyr-Akten* (1929), as well as in H. M. Gwatkin's *Selections from Early Christian Literature* (xx. A). The English version may be found also in B. J. Kidd's *Documents Illustrative of Church History* (i, pp. 114, 115) and E. C. E. Owen's *Some Authentic Acts of the Early Martyrs* (pp. 71 f., 147 f.). There is a French version in Pierre Hanozin's *La Geste des Martyrs* (Paris, 1935, pp. 57-59), with general discussions in Monceaux's *Histoire Littéraire de l'Afrique* (i, pp. 61-70), H. Lecerq's *L'Afrique chrétienne* (i, pp. 120-122), and E. Buonaiuti's *Il cristianesimo nell' Africa romana* (pp. 6 f.).

<sup>10</sup> From the discussion of *Annal.* xv. 44 in Professor E. T. Merrill's *Essays in Early Christian History* (pp. 99 f.).

<sup>11</sup> The note of quiet joy and confidence pervading primitive prayers of the Church is discussed by J. Marty in *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses* (1929, pp. 234 f., 366 f.; 1930, pp. 90 f.), to which F. Cabrol's paper on "La doxologie dans la prière chrétienne des premiers siècles" in *Melanges Grandmaison* (1928, pp. 9-30) is an apt pendant. Few more interesting studies in this connection are to be found than a comparison of Calvin's recognition of joy, as this is finely presented by Léon Wencelius in the *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses* (1935, pp. 70 f., "L'idée de joie dans la pensée de Calvin"), with the glowing

raptures of his contemporaries Santa Teresa and Francis Xavier; the contrasts bring out the thrill of tradition which moved all three so variously.

<sup>12</sup> The non-canonical material of gospels, acts, epistles, and apocalypses is translated in M. R. James' *Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1924). The chief scraps of gospels discovered since I surveyed the uncanonical gospels in 1918 (Hastings' *Dictionary of the Apostolic Age*, i. pp. 478-506) are described in *The New Gospel Fragments* (British Museum, 1935) and H. I. Bell's *Recent Discoveries of Biblical Papyri* (Oxford, 1937). Professor E. J. Goodspeed's *History of Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, 1942) reveals how much primitive literature of the Church has perished, some of which would be more valuable to us than not a little of the surviving material.

<sup>13</sup> *Theologico-Politicus Tractatus* (i. 23, 24): "cui dei placita quae homines ad salutem ducunt, sine verbis aut visionibus sed immediate revelata sunt . . . si Moses cum deo faciem ad faciem loquebatur, Christus quidem de mente ad mentem cum deo communicavit."

<sup>14</sup> See Norden's *Agnostos Theos* (pp. 286 f.) and Loeb in *Bibliothèque de l'École des hautes études: Science Religieuse* (1889), pp. 307-322.

<sup>15</sup> Hermas' *Similitudes* (viii. 3, 2), Justin Martyr's *Dialogue* (xi). When Christians turned to Christ for illumination of soul, they were doing what the Jews did as they turned to the Law, "the crucial difference between the two forms of religion" being, as R. Travers Herford puts it, in his *Talmud and Apocrypha* (pp. 299 f.), "that the one is centred on an Idea and the other on a Person." The context of practical belief in traditions and the authority of the Torah is acutely analyzed by G. Kittel in *Probleme des Paläst. Spätjudentum und das Urchristentum* (1926, pp. 130 f.).

<sup>16</sup> Maurice Goguel's paper on "Jésus et la tradition religieuse de son peuple" in the *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses* (1927, pp. 154 f., 219 f.), B. H. Branscomb's *Jesus and the Law of Moses* (especially Chaps. III and VII), B. S. Easton's *Christ in the Gospels* (Chaps. IV and V), and W. G. Kümmel's essay on "Jesus und der jüdische Traditionsgeanke" in the *Zeitschrift für*

*die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (1934, pp. 105-130) represent a common outline which varies in details and emphasis at only one or two points.

<sup>17</sup> Luther's words are from a sermon on Titus ii. 11-15 (Weimar ed., x. 1, pp. 46 f.); Taylor's, from a noble passage in *The Liberty of Prophesying* (sect. i, 3, 4), followed by another passage (sect. x), on the function and limits of tradition, which deserves to be placed beside Hooker's classical statement in *Ecclesiastical Polity* (lxv. 2). The modern critical position may be studied in books like Rudolf Otto's *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man* (new ed., 1942), F. C. Burkitt's *Jesus Christ* (1932, pp. 58, 59, 77 f.) and his article in *The Modern Churchman* (1928, pp. 357 f.), and Professor F. C. Grant's *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Chap. VIII) and his article on "The Spiritual Christ" in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1935, pp. 1-15).

<sup>18</sup> The integral unity of preoccupation with a central issue, amid differences and divergencies in the New Testament, is recognized by Auguste Bill's essay in the *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses* (1933, pp. 324-369) and Maurice Goguel's sketch of "Unité et diversité du christianisme primitif" in the same *Revue* (1939, pp. 1-54). Fuller proof that the New Testament is not a heterogeneous collection of documents from different local churches is led by A. M. Hunter in *The Unity of the New Testament* (1943).

<sup>19</sup> The varied usages of "paradosis" or tradition in the Greek fathers, who in the main take Scripture as the primary source and test of dogmatic tradition, are best summarized by G. L. Prestige in *Theology* (1926, pp. 8-14). Sometimes, however, the Platonic sense of "instruction" survives when the catechetical "paradosis" is in question.

<sup>20</sup> The three passages are 2 Tim. i. 12, 1 Tim. vi. 20 (with iv. 7 and Titus i. 10, 14; iii. 9), and 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. Early Christians were most scrupulous about the duty of honesty in handling trust funds; Pliny (*Epp.* x. 96) found that the Bithynian church took a solemn oath against any embezzlement of money committed to a member, and against any denial of having received valuables when a demand was made for their return. This ethical conscientiousness accounted for the metaphorical use of the current terminology

in describing the responsibilities, functions, and privileges of men in the apostolic succession as trustees for tradition.

<sup>21</sup> The Greek text is edited by Harnack in Lietzmann's *Kleine Texte* (1904). See W. Foerster's monograph on *Von Valentin zu Heracleon* (1928, pp. 81 f.). I have published a short study of the piece in *The Canadian Journal of Theology* (1930, pp. 182-188). There is an English version in J. C. Ayer's *Source Book for Ancient Church History* (1913, pp. 95-102).

<sup>22</sup> So J. Kunze in *Glaubensregel, Heilige Schrift, und Taufbekennnis* (1899, pp. 375-382). The pages on tradition in Professor J. F. Bethune-Baker's *Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine* (pp. 41-61) are a concise, reliable survey of this obscure field in Church history, which is best surveyed, from the Roman angle, by A. D'Alès in the *Dictionnaire Apologétique de la foi Catholique* (1922, iv, 1740-1755).

<sup>23</sup> *Arians of the Fourth Century* (pp. 362, 363).

<sup>24</sup> Edwin Hatch in *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church* (p. 84).

<sup>25</sup> This is one point brought out by J. de Ghellinck's brilliant essay on "Patristique et argument de tradition au bas moyen âge" (*Aus der Geisteswelt des Mittelalters*, 1935, pp. 404-426), where it is shown how, for all their differences, Aquinas and Buonaventura agree in ignoring so important a Catholic writer as Irenaeus.

<sup>26</sup> P. H. Wicksteed, *Reactions between Dogma and Philosophy* (1920, p. 174).

<sup>27</sup> The proceedings and contributions, including the official correspondence, are chronicled in the Societas Goerresiana's *Concilium Tridentinum* by S. Ehses (Vol. V, pp. 39 f.) and V. Schweitzer (Vol. XII, 1, pp. 473-538); they are summarized by A. Michel in the new French edition of Hefele's *Histoire des Conciles* (1938, x, pp. 10-25). An objective view of the contemporary political context is provided by Martin Philippon's *La Contre-Révolution religieuse* (Paris, 1884, pp. 279 f.).

<sup>28</sup> The first to realize the significance of this scene for the way in which the Tridentine policy was forced through, was Reinhold Seeberg in a paper contributed to the *Zeitschrift für kirchliche Wissenschaft und kirchliches Leben* (1889, pp. 546-559, 604-616). Further light on the real or alleged ambiguities due to the

Council's policy is thrown by Father Robert Hull's pages on "The Council of Trent and Tradition" in *The Ecclesiastical Review* (1929, pp. 469-482, 602-615), though he passes over the Nanchianti episode.

<sup>29</sup> Reginald Pole was less fortunate. He was a high-minded soul, one of a small Italian group who had not been unsympathetic with some of Luther's ideas; but he lacked moral courage. In the debate over Scripture he had to state the official position on tradition, but the result of the vote showed him that the Council was committed to an uncompromising policy. He lost interest and influence in its proceedings, and presently retired on the pretext of ill-health. Not even French support enabled an Englishman with royal blood in his veins to win the papal chair; the curia needed an Italian and a good party man. After Cranmer's martyrdom, however, Queen Mary had him ordained to the priesthood, and he spent the two closing years of his life as the last Roman Archbishop of Canterbury. It was a tardy ray of sunshine after the cloud of papal suspicion and antipathy under which he had of late been living.

<sup>30</sup> *History of Freedom* (pp. 493 f.); see further the editorial comment in *Lord Acton's Correspondence* (Vol. I, pp. xvii f.).

<sup>31</sup> See Foucher de Careil's *Oeuvres de Leibnitz* (2d ed., Paris, 1867 f., i, 245), the best edition of Leibnitz. English readers are fortunate to have, a sound monograph on the subject by Dr. G. J. Jordan, *The Reunion of the Churches: a study of G. W. Leibnitz and his great attempt* (London, 1927).

<sup>32</sup> Original text with English translation (St. Louis and London, 1941, pp. 17, 295). Father Puller's words (above) are cited from his article in *Theology* (ix, pp. 76-83, 270-277).

<sup>33</sup> What is common to Calvin's theological precision and Luther's spiritual intuitions on this point is analyzed by T. M. Lindsay in his *History of the Reformation* (i, pp. 453-468). Luther's *Stellung zur heiligen Schrift* is the title of two pamphlets by Otto Scheel (pp. 34 f.) and Karl Thcime (pp. 68 f.), but the principles of his teaching on the Spirit and the Word are best described by Karl Holl in his *Luther* (6th ed., 1932, pp. 292 f., 431 f., 555 f.) and Erich Seeberg in his *Luther* (i, pp. 63-72, 197 f., 216 f.; ii, 180 f., 290 f.), as Calvin's are by Jacques Pannier in *Le Temoi-*

*age du Saint-Esprit* (Paris, pp. 70 f.) and Professor B. B. Warfield in *Calvin and Calvinism* (Oxford, pp. 29-130).

<sup>34</sup> Evidence for the importance attached to the testimony of the Spirit in the early Church and later, as a factor in the use of Scripture by Christians, is gathered by H. J. Holtzmann in his remarkable book on *Kanon und Tradition* (1859, pp. 329 f., 403 f., 438 f., 440 f.), written when he was a young lecturer at Heidelberg. A sequel would have been welcome, but Holtzmann became too engrossed in New Testament criticism to return to the subject. His attitude to the Bible approximates on the whole to that of Schleiermacher.

<sup>35</sup> *The Spirit of Worship* (p. 71). The devout, subtle Romano Guardini admits, in *The Church and the Catholic* (Eng. trans., pp. 99 f.), that the primal character of the Mass "has been widely forgotten. It has often been made the private devotion of the individual," as opposed to the evidence of the early Church. For the general attitude of the Greek Church to tradition, see Professor Frank Gavin's paper in *The Christian East* (1922, pp. 162-173).

<sup>36</sup> J. B. Mozley, *The Theory of Development* (pp. 132-143).

<sup>37</sup> J. S. Haldane, *Organism and Environment* (p. 117).

<sup>38</sup> *The Development of Christian Doctrine* (Chap. IV, sect. 3. 8).

<sup>39</sup> Dom Cuthbert Butler, in *The Vatican Council* (ii. 98) paraphrases the epigram, "Witnesses of tradition? there's only one; that's me." He explains that Pius the Ninth was speaking as a "private theologian."

<sup>40</sup> The incident is narrated in A. Baudrillart's *Vie de Monsignor D'Hulst* (2d ed., i, pp. 458 f.). The significance of "Catholic tradition" in this connection is revealed to outsiders on pp. 84 f. of *Der Katholizismus: seine Stirb und Werde* (1937), an anonymous volume of essays, edited by Gustav Mensching, where a group of progressive laymen and priests, in the interests of larger Catholic unity, aim at release from neo-Thomism and clericalism and the official restraints upon critical investigation in biblical or dogmatic spheres.

<sup>41</sup> August Deneffe's *Der Traditionsbegriff* and Joseph Ranft's *Der Ursprung des katholischen Traditionsprinzips*. There is more appreciation of the great Cardinal in Professor J. Coppens' *Pour*



*Croire au Christ et à l'Eglise* (Louvain, 1937), an essay in synthetic apology.

<sup>42</sup> In *Physics and Politics* (Chap. II. 3). It was Bagehot who brought his friend Hutton under the influence of Maurice (see text, page 138).

<sup>43</sup> George Santayana, *Egotism in German Philosophy* (2d ed., 1940, pp. 127 f., 14).

<sup>44</sup> Cited and illustrated by Dr. Guillaume in *The Traditions of Islam* (pp. 77 f.), and in *A Literary History of the Arabs* (p. 145) by Dr. R. A. Nicholson, who adds that "during the first century of Islam the forging of traditions became a recognized political and religious weapon, of which all parties availed themselves."

<sup>45</sup> In *The Character of a Trimmer* (ii), a book written to trim the ship of State by keeping things on a proper balance. The second chapter is a shrewd appreciation of the Protestant religion.

<sup>46</sup> So Dr. Maurice Frost in *The Journal of Theological Studies* (1942, pp. 59-68).

<sup>47</sup> See Dr. E. C. S. Gibson's argument in *The Church Quarterly Review* (1888, p. 14) and Dr. John Wordsworth's book on the *Te Deum* (S.P.C.K., 1903, p. 28). Bede (*H. E.* ii. 1) recalled how Gregory the First had added to the canon of the Mass this petition, "Bid us to be numbered in the flock of thine elect."

<sup>48</sup> In *Modern Guides of English Thought in Matters of Faith* (pp. 316 f.).

<sup>49</sup> Jeremiah (vi. 16, xviii. 15, 16). "It will be found," Robertson Smith observes in his *Prophets of Israel* (p. 83), "that all great religious reformations have their roots in the past; the true reformers do not claim to be heard on the ground of the new things they proclaim, but rather because they alone give due weight to old truths which the mass of their contemporaries cannot formally deny, but practically ignore."

<sup>50</sup> Some account of this is given by Harnack in *Bible Reading in the Early Church* (pp. 13 f.).

<sup>51</sup> From Professor J. W. Mackail's preface to his edition of the *Aeneid* (Oxford, 1930, p. lxxvii). The Hazlitt reference is to page 55 of his *New Writings* (1925), and the Newman passage

may be found in the fourth chapter of *A Grammar of Assent* (ii. 4).

<sup>52</sup> In Heiler's *Das Gebet* (3d ed., 1921, p. 266; Eng. trans., pp. 153 f.).



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